

# Beadle's BOY'S LIBRARY of Sport, Story and Adventure

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No. 1.

Published  
Every Week.

M. J. IVERS & CO., Publishers,  
(James Sullivan, Proprietor.)  
379 Pearl Street, New York.

Price 5 Cents.  
\$2.50 a Year.

Vol. 1.

## Dandy Bill's Doom; or, Deerhunter, the Boy Scout,

BY OLL COOMBS.





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# Dandy Bill's Doom;

OR,

## DEERHUNTER, THE BOY SCOUT

OF THE

### GREAT NORTH WOODS.

BY OLL COOMES.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### EXCITEMENT IN RED PINE.

THE nation was struggling in the throes of a great civil rebellion. The fields of the Sunny South were being deluged with blood. Mourning and sorrow were coming into nearly every home in the land. With almost palsied hearts men, women and children listened in dread suspense for tidings from the field of battle.

In the great cities, in the quiet rural villages, in the lonely mining-camps in the great mountains, in the remote border settlements—in fact, in every home and hamlet in the North and in the South, that same dread feeling of fear, anxiety, and suspense almost paralyzed the minds and hearts of men.

One August afternoon a horseman sweeping along a dim road that wound through a deep, dark Minnesota forest, suddenly appeared in sight of the little frontier settlement of Red Pine. He was the mail-carrier coming down from Mankato, and at sight of his shout burst from the lips of the two-score of settlers that stood out in front of Kit Redpath's store, for they were satisfied he would bring news from the seat of war, and it was for this that they had gathered there that afternoon.

As the carrier approached the crowd parted to let him pass, and as he rode down between the lines, every eye searched his face as if expecting to read therein evidence of a great victory or defeat.

Redpath met him at the door and took the mail-bag, and then, with a passing word to a few of the settlers, the carrier turned and rode away toward his stopping-place while in Red Pine.

It did not take the postmaster long to change the mail, and then taking his position on a stump in front of his store, he read to the crowd the latest news brought in from the daily press of St. Paul.

There was some good news to the men, and some bad. The former was hailed with cheers, and the latter with expressions of the deepest regret; but as Redpath read on the news became more and more unfavorable and a deep gloom began to settle over the spirits of the bordermen.

Suddenly some one on the outside of the crowd uttered a shout when all other lips were mute and quivering with emotion. Instantly a cry of indignation burst from the crowd.

"Who dares to cheer over our defeat?" demanded a voice, fierce with the spirit of resentment.

"Hang the traitor! hang the traitor!" yelled a dozen in chorus. Then the crowd surged toward the object of its maddened fury.

"Back! back!" shouted a settler, "it was only Simple Sam!"

Th' fury of the men was somewhat abated by this information, though not before a circle had been formed around the offending person. The sight of him at once satisfied all that he was not responsible, for he was a poor, demented boy known as Simple Sam, and Cross-eyed Sam. He was dressed in buckskin and rags, his face was dirty and his hair unkempt. He was as harmless as an infant, and for the past two years had been drifting about the

country, sometimes with the Indians at the Upper Agency, where he was treated with the utmost kindness, and sometimes at Red Pine, where he was also cared for by the kind-hearted. Whence Simple Sam had come no one knew. He was not over eighteen years of age, was of medium height and spare build. Both eyes were affected with strabismus, while his speech was at times almost incoherent.

With a feeling of relief the crowd turned back, and after Redpath had concluded his reading, it broke up into little groups and began discussing the war news. While thus engaged, some one suddenly exclaimed:

"What in the mystery 's that a-coming?"

Off to the northwest was an opening, or prairie, most of which was under cultivation and in growing corn. A road ran north and south through the fields to a point due west of Red Pine where it made an abrupt bend and entered the village.

Down along this road, and yet to all appearances walking in mid-air, a man was moving at a rapid pace. A person on foot, or even on horseback could not have been seen above the top of the tall corn, unless he stood up on the animal's back; but all observed that this was not now the case, for they could plainly see the unknown making long strides—they could even see his feet moving along even with the tops of the tasseled corn!

"Well, I'll be confounded if that don't savor of a mystery!" declared old Squire Hawkins, the legal functionary of Red Pine; "what do you say, captain?"

"I'm not prepared to say," replied Captain Swank, the military genius of the settlement. "It reminds me of a fairy story. I've heard of female fairies skimm' round on blades o' grass, and poppin' out o' the hearts o' flowers, but blamed if I ever heard o' a male fairy promenadin' over the top o' a cornfield."

"Well, that's just what that critter-r's doin' and I tell you he's humpin' hisself, too, like sixty!" declared the squire.

"Yes, he seems to be," assented the captain.

The whole party was not a little puzzled. That a man was absolutely walking along down the fields in mid-air they solemnly believed.

With bated breath and fixed eyes they watched the aerial pedestrian. When he should reach the point where the road turned toward the village they hoped to be able to unravel the mystery of the traveler.

With eyes misty and aching from steady gazing, the settlers finally saw the unknown turn the corner half a mile away.

"By the thunder of Jove!" exclaimed Captain Swank, "he 's walkin' in mid-air, boys!"

Squire Hawkins took off his glasses and carefully wiped them with his kerchief, then he readjusted the lenses, took another look at the aerial mystery, and then—broke into an outburst of laughter!

"What a whole mess of simpletons we are," he said. "Ha! ha! ha! that's nothin' but some feller on high stilts—nothin' else. Your fairy story, captain, won't work hereaways. But, by the shades of Blackstone! isn't the feller peggin' it down lively, though? Isn't he a quarter-hoss on the go?"

Now that their attention was called to the fact all could plainly see that the squire spoke the truth—that the mystery had resolved itself into a man walking upon high stilts! But, who was he? One suggested it was the big boy of some settler coming into the village to display his skill in stilt-walking, while another declared it was a stranger. But, while the unknown was still some forty rods away, Simple Sam suddenly shouted forth:

"Ho—ooh! Happy Jack! Deerhunter!"

"Who is, by the memory of Blackstone!" declared Squire Hawkins: "it's Jack Darrell—our young friend, Deerhunter! What in the plague 's the boy up to, now?"

"Up to the top o' them stilts, 'squire," replied the captain, ejecting a torrent of tobacco-juice; then



taking off his hat he tossed it high in the air and gave utterance to a shout that was taken up and repeated by the crowd.

Happy Jack Darrell, as the approaching youth was sometimes called, or Deerhunter, as he was generally known, was a great favorite at Red Pine, and his return, after three months' absence, was hailed with joy.

The youth approached rapidly on his stilts, and as he came within easy speaking distance, he shouted to the settlers:

"Folks, have you heard the awful news?"

"What, from the war?" asked Squire Hawkins.

"Laud, no!" replied the boy in an excited tone.

"What then, Deerhunter?" demanded Captain Swank.

The boy made no answer but walked on until he had reached the end of Redpath's store against which he leaned as if almost exhausted. His stilts were fully ten feet in height, elevating him until his head rose a foot above the peak of the store.

Deerhunter was a boy of about eighteen years of age. He was of medium height, with a slender, supple figure, a magnetic blue eye, and a fair, sun-browned face that glowed with the ruddiness of health and the buoyancy of a brave and rollicking spirit.

With the exception of his minkskin cap the young hunter was dressed in a complete suit of buckskin, with fringed leggings and beaded moccasins.

At his back was slung a handsome little rifle—the same with which he had won local fame and the name of "Deerhunter."

The home of this youth was a log-cabin that stood on the banks of the Des Moines river, a few miles south of Red Pine. He was there when Kit Redpath located a trading-post on Lake Shetek, that at once formed the nucleus around which the village of Red Pine sprung into existence. The youth's friends had been slain in the Indian massacre at Spirit Lake, some six years previous to the opening of our story. He and two neighbor men named Slavens and Dalton being absent from home at the time of the attack, escaped death at the hands of Inkpadutah's warriors. But as soon as Slavens and Dalton found their friends had been massacred, they resolved to wreak a bloody revenge, and started on the trail of the red-skins, who had fled north into Minnesota. They took the boy, Jack, with them rather than lose time in accompanying him to the next nearest settlement, which was many miles distant. It being in the dead of winter, and the ground covered with snow, they had no trouble in following the savages. But a terrible snow-storm finally overtook them, and they were compelled to go into camp. Being provided with an ax they proceeded to erect a small cabin, and here they were forced to remain for some months. The woods being almost alive with deer, they had no trouble in procuring abundance of food.

As soon as the winter broke up the two bordermen induced Jack to remain at the cabin until they visited the Indian village far to the north. The journey, they claimed, would be too great for him, and the proud-spirited boy, not wishing to hamper them in any way, consented to stay there all alone until they should return.

One month from the day they left, Slavens returned, seriously wounded and a cripple for life. Dalton had been killed. The boy took care of his wounded friend, remaining there in that lonely cabin. In fact, they could not have left had they so desired. Slavens could not walk, nor had they horse or canoe.

The first person to visit their cabin was Kit Redpath, then on his way to Lake Shetek. While he was there Slavens died. Kit helped the boy to perform the last sad rites for his dead friend, and when about to resume his journey he asked Jack to go with him.

But the boy declined. He had become greatly attached to his wildwood home, and was having such

glorious sport in deer-hunting that he was loth to give it up.

As soon, however, as Redpath opened his store the boy became a frequent visitor there. He exchanged his deerskins for ammunition, provisions and clothing, and finally he procured some traps and went to trapping as well as hunting. A warm friendship sprang up between him and Redpath that grew with the years. The trader was not only a friend, but a father to the boy.

For some months previous to the opening of our story, Deerhunter had been off on a ramble to Fort Ridgely and the Upper Indian Agency. He had promised Kit that he would return by the time the hunting-season opened, but was not expected back before, and the moment Redpath heard he had come, and had caught the expression on his face, he knew something was wrong.

As soon as the boy had braced himself against the store, he took off his cap and hanging it on the peak of the gable, looked down into the eager, upturned faces of the settlers and said, in answer to their anxious inquiries:

"Death is abroad in the woods of Minnesota! The Ingins are on the war-path burnin' and slayin'!"

"Is that true, Deerhunter?" solemnly inquired Captain Swank.

"Yes, the sacred truth, captain!" returned the boy seriously; "I was present myself at the attack on the Upper Agency and barely escaped with my life. The Indian agent's boy and I were out practicin' on our stilts for a big race when the attack begun. I don't know whether they got poor 'Dug' or not. Bands of red skins are scatterin' all over the country, and they'll no doubt come to Red Pine. I hurried home fast as these poles 'd carry me to warn you folks, and I'm jest about wilted. I was awful afraid the Sioux would get in ahead of me; but now, folks, my advice is for you to rustle around and get ready to do some fightin'."

"Great God!" exclaimed Captain Swank, "I'd hoped never to see another Ingin war, but if it's to come, we've got to prepare for it. We've no stockade, no block-house, no nothin' in which to place our women and children, and—"

"Well, what do you propose we do?" interrupted an impatient fellow.

"Organize and go to work!" promptly responded the doughty captain; "put every man, woman, and child to work, and whoop up a stockade that'll beat Gibraltar for a defense. But the very first thing we ought to do is to select a good man for a scout."

"That's so! that's so!" shouted a dozen voices.

"I propose the name of Deerhunter," exclaimed Kit Redpath, "for he knows every foot of all this country."

"And I propose the name of Neal Gordon," shouted a settler named Joe Randall.

"That's two," said Swank; "any more? Well, we'll have to take a vote on the question, for we don't want more'n one good scout; for I know by experience that too many scouts are like too many generals. G-ntlemen, fall into a line, and I'll take your vote in short meter."

The crowd quickly fell into line.

Deerhunter still stood leaning against the peak of the store on his stilts, his bronzed face now wearing a calm, indifferent look.

Neal Gordon, the other candidate, stood at one side, leaning upon his rifle, and endeavoring to appear indifferent as to the result of the vote that was to place the safety of Red Pine in his or Deerhunter's care. He was a man of perhaps five-and-twenty years of age, with a splendid physique, and rather prepossessing face. He was dressed in a borderman's suit, and was well armed, and, upon the whole, presented a more favorable appearance, at least, for the responsible position of scout, than the young stripling who stood perched against the store.

Gordon had once been a hunter in the employ of



the Northwestern Fur Company, and afterward a clerk in the post-trader's store at the Indian Agency on the Yellow Medicine. While there he had learned the language, ways, and customs of the Sioux, and it was his possession of this knowledge, as well as his being a good rifle-shot and a clever fellow, that led Joe Randall to name him for special scout—a position of great honor and trust among the bordermen. Furthermore, rumor had it that Gordon was likely to wed the pretty daughter of Squire Hawkins, and as Kitty Hawkins was the idol of Red Pine, it was naturally supposed that the man who could win the love of such a girl would stand well with all the settlers.

"Now," said Captain Swank, as the settlers fell into line, "all that favor Neal Gordon for scout will hold up their right hands until counted."

Several hands went up. The captain counted them.

"Fifteen," announced the captain. "Hands down; now all that favor Deerhunter hold up."

"Fifteen with mine—a tie, by Jove! How will it be decided?"

"Let them draw cuts," suggested Joe Randall.

"Or decide it with their rifles at a mark a hundred paces off," added Kit Redpath.

But scarcely had he spoken when the wild, piercing shriek of a woman fell upon the ears of the party. The cry came from beyond the trader's store, and quickly turning his head, Deerhunter saw, from his elevated position, a sight that sent a chill of horror to his young heart. It was that of a monster gray eagle bearing away in its talons a little child—a mere infant—that had, unobserved by its mother, crawled from the house out almost to the edge of the wood.

Quick as thought Deerhunter slipped his feet from the stirrups of his stilts and like a meteor shot down the slender staffs, to the ground, then he darted around the store whither the crowd had preceded him, unslinging his rifle from his back as he went.

A cry of horror escaped the lips of the men when they discovered the eagle slowly skimming along the clearing and gradually rising into the air with its tender human burden.

"Shoot! shoot, Gordon!" cried Joe Randall almost distracted, for it was his babe the rapacious bird was bearing away.

Gordon raised his rifle and glanced along the barrel, then lowered the weapon without firing.

"I dare not!" he said, trembling in every limb.

Without a word, Deerhunter ran to the front of the crowd, raised his slender-barreled rifle, glanced through the sights—keeping the muzzle of his piece moving with the moving bird, and then pressed the trigger.

As the gun rung out the great bird was heard to utter a scream and seen to stagger in the air, and after a desperate effort to rise, it sunk slowly to the earth with its burden, while wild shouts burst from the hitherto palsied lips of the spectators.

Accustomed to taking the deer on the bound, Deerhunter had become a wonderful shot on moving objects, and although the fierce bird was over a hundred yards away, he sent a bullet straight through its body, and it sunk to the earth, though struggling with winnowing wings against every inch of descent—its terrible talons rendered so rigid by the agonies of death that it could not release the child, whose baby shrieks were piercing the air.

Deerhunter, quick on foot as a young antelope, was the first to reach the child, and tearing its clothing from the talons of the monster bird, lifted it in his arms and shouted:

"The youngster's all right! Let it scream!"

Bleeding and bruised, though not seriously injured, the babe was restored to the arms of its mother, whose lips uttered a fervent prayer to the Giver of Life, while the father, Joe Randall, showered blessings on the young rifleman who became the hero of the hour, and was finally borne back to the

trader's store on the shoulders of two brawny settlers; and when the question of selecting a scout again came up, Deerhunter was chosen by a unanimous vote.

## CHAPTER II.

### DEERHUNTER IN CLOSE QUARTERS.

WITHIN an hour after his appointment as scout, Deerhunter had equipped himself and taken his departure into the woods, promising to return as soon as he had anything of importance to communicate.

He moved away northward, following a densely wooded ridge overlooking the valley of Rattlesnake Run—a small, winding stream that, flowing southward, emptied into Lake Sisseton. He was satisfied that if the Sioux had designs upon Red Pine they would come in from that direction.

The young hunter was highly honored by being selected scout over Neal Gordon, and felt that he had won a victory that would have a favorable bearing on another matter, in which he and Gordon were rivals, and that was the admiration of pretty Kitty Hawkins; for it was true the young deerhunter had come to regard the vivacious girl with a feeling stronger than mere friendship, yet, boy that he was, he had never dared to hope for a reciprocal feeling on Kitty's part, since the handsome and interesting Neal Gordon had become such a favorite in the eyes of so many of the settlers.

Deerhunter had confidence enough in himself for a scout, but not for a lover. Being a boy, he felt a degree of inferiority by the side of the man; and so he made up his mind to overcome this in deeds of daring, and with that determination firmly fixed in his mind, he went forth with all the resolute spirit of a knight of old.

When some distance from the settlement night came on, so he selected a suitable spot for a bivouac and sat down, leaning against a tree. He had scarcely done so ere he caught the faint glimmer of a light among the trees in the valley before him.

Springing to his feet, the young scout made his way toward it. With noiseless step he approached until he was enabled to see that it came from a camp-fire, before which sat a solitary figure which, to all appearance, was that of a white man. To make sure of this, however, he crept to within fifty paces of the fire, when he was not only enabled to see that the fellow was a white man, but his rival—Neal Gordon!

The boy was almost thunderstruck. He had left Neal Gordon at Red Pine, apparently feeling none the worse for his defeat, and expressing a willingness and readiness to assist the settlers in erecting their stockade; and now to find him there—in ahead of him—was something he could not understand. That there was anything wrong about Gordon's movements never once entered the boy's mind, and yet he hesitated to advance and make his presence known.

This hesitation was perhaps the most fortunate event in Jack Darrell's whole life for, while he stood suddenly looking at the man and pondering over the situation, a dozen persons appeared from the darkness beyond the camp-fire and as they entered within the circle of light, Neal Gordon arose and gave them a hearty greeting. Two of the party were white men, and the others Sioux warriors painted and plumed for the war-path!

Deerhunter involuntarily shrunk into the deepest shadows muttering to himself the word "treachery." Then, with all the indignation of his young heart aroused, he stood and watched the party, his eyes almost burning into the darkness.

He was satisfied that the Indians and their white allies had come there to meet Gordon by appointment, and if this was true, he readily comprehended its meaning, and the danger Red Pine had escaped in refusing to select the man as scout. He was sat-



ished that the red-skins before him were but a small party sent out from a larger force encamped somewhere in the valley, for a dozen warriors would not undertake to capture and destroy the settlement; but whatever was the truth, Deerhunter was resolved not to remain in doubt about it, and at once endeavored to devise some plan by which to get at the bottom facts.

The Indians having seated themselves around the fire Gordon arose and began to address them, but spoke in so low a tone that the young spy could make out not a word said. Jack had already discovered that he could not, with safety, get close enough from that position, to hear what was said, and so moved around to the right until he found himself on the banks of Rattlesnake Run.

The stream was there fringed with dense shrubbery, through which ran a broad deer-trail. Turning into this, the boy, concealing his rifle and accoutrements, began creeping on all-fours up the stream. When about two rods from the council-fire he came to an immense hollow log, the further end of which extended to within five feet of the nearest red-skin. He recognized the log in an instant as the one in which he had once treed two black bears, and as there was no brush on the side next to the creek to screen him, and besides, there being but scant room between the log and the edge of the bank, which was ten feet high, he conceived the idea of approaching still closer to the council by crawling *into* this log, and at once proceeded to carry it into effect, using extreme caution in so doing.

He was fully five minutes going ten feet. He had marked a spot where a pencil of light shone in through a tiny knot-hole that he desired to reach before settling himself down to listen; but before he had gained that point he was suddenly brought to a stop by the sharp "skirr" and vicious blowing of a rattlesnake almost in his very face!

With a stifled cry the boy started back, expecting every instant to feel the fangs of the deadly reptile in his face, but before he had retreated far he was made aware of an unusual commotion among the Indians, and as the serpent had ceased its noise, he stopped, pressed his ear against the side of the log and listened. He heard the red-skins and the whites talking about the "rattler" in the log, and this discovery gave him no little uneasiness.

What to do the youth could not tell. Should the savages endeavor to drive the serpent out of the log to kill it, discovery was certain; so Jack concluded to back down to the end of the log and make a dash for safety; but before he had made a movement in that direction he heard a voice—that of Neal Gordon—say:

"Roll the log and snake both into the creek."

The movement of feet told the boy of the general assent to this suggestion, and before Deerhunter had time to act, he felt the log shake—move slowly, then, after two or three revolutions, leap over the bank and fall into the creek with a splash.

Deerhunter was considerably shaken up and his head severely bumped by the fall of the log, but keeping his presence of mind, he soon got himself right side up. The first thing he noticed was that the log had broken in two near his head, it being nothing but a rotten shell. The ends of the two halves lay within three feet of each other.

Fortunately the water was not over a foot in depth in the run, and by resting his elbows on the bottom of the log and his chin in his palms, Deerhunter was enabled to keep his head out of the water, although his body was nearly submerged.

The water being warm, the boy experienced no discomfort, from his position, and so resolved to remain right there until the way was clear or he was forced to vacate. He regretted his inability to gain the information he sought, but would be well satisfied to get out of his difficulty with his life.

From where he lay he could hear the Indians' and whites' voices, but the sound was so blended with

the ripple and gurgle of the stream that he could make out nothing definite.

The moon came up, and it so happened that her beams fell full upon the creek at that point; and as the boy's head was not over a foot from the end of the log, he could see the sparkling waters gliding in and around the log. But in time this became monotonous, yet the young spy was too cautious to take a single risk, when not required.

Hour after hour he lay there listening to the gurgle of the brook, the piping tree-frogs along the banks, and the chirruping crickets in the old log.

The voices of the councilors finally became hushed, and as the moon had so changed that the little waterway now lay in shadows, the young scout ventured to peer out at the end of his retreat. But he quickly started, and withdrew his head as he did so, for he not only saw the form of an Indian sitting upon the bank above, but heard that same hateful, warning "skirr" and blowing of a snake in the half of the log lying near!

"Confound that reptile!" the boy mentally observed; "if I ever get rid of the Ingins I'll grind its head under my heel!"

Fully satisfied now that there was no chance for present escape, Deerhunter again settled down with his chin in his palms to await developments.

The hours seemed to pass very slowly, but the youth's patience was finally rewarded by sounds indicative of approaching day. He heard the Indians arousing from their slumbers, and shortly afterward birds began their morning carols in the woods.

Before it was fairly light the red-skins took their departure. Of this Deerhunter was sure, but he still maintained his position to allow the enemy ample time to get out of sight. While thus waiting he was suddenly startled by the discovery of what appeared to be the shadowy outlines of a human face in the dark mouth of the log above him. That it was simply imagination he had not a doubt and scarcely gave it a second thought; but the lighter it grew the plainer that face became unfolded from the shadows of the log, and, finally, when the sun arose above the forest tops its rays streaming into the end of the log, revealed the rough bearded face of an old man who was lying on his stomach—his chin resting in his palms exactly as was Deerhunter's—regarding the young scout with a look of comic and apparently silent contempt.

The boy was astounded by this discovery. He had never seen that face before, and he knew not what to make out of that peculiar, magnetic gleam of the steel-gray eyes fixed upon him.

The man was the first to interrupt this battle of eyes, and in a voice expressive of great surprise and supreme disgust, he drawled out:

"By the great Rosycrusians! I'm completely ashamed of myself!"

"Here too," quickly responded Deerhunter, somewhat nettled by the man's looks and words, "if I was such a lookin' critter as you are. Say, what are you, a man? or chimpanzee?"

"I'm no pup—coyote—no baby pollywog, but I'm Old Skirr-r-r-r!"

The boy involuntarily started back as the man produced that sound by placing to his lips and blowing through a short, hollow reed, in one end of which was fixed the rattles of a snake, which, as the wind rushed through the reed, were set to vibrating—producing a sound in exact imitation of the serpent's warning rattle!

"Sufferin' Job! if I had a pistol here I'd shoot you for the Old Original Serpent!" declared the boy scout. "You look old and mean enough to be that very snake of Eden, and as I owe you one for fooling me last night I'll maul your head into blubbers if you'll get out of that log."

"I'll accommodate you, you lily-lipped, velvet-throated avenger," exclaimed the old man, wriggling his slender, wiry form from the log and rising to his feet; "now come out and climb—"



He did not finish the sentence for his attention was arrested by a quick footstep on the bank above him, and the next instant a savage warrior with a drawn tomahawk leaped down into the run, and with a demoniac war-whoop bounded toward the old fellow. He endeavored to pass between the ends of the broken log and as he did so, Deerhunter thrust out his head and shoulders from his log, and the savage's foot striking the boy he was tripped up, falling flat on his face in the stream.

Before the painted wretch could rise the old man quickly leaped astride his back and, seizing him by the scalp-lock with his left hand, thrust his head under the water, while with the right hand he wrenched the red-skin's tomahawk from his grasp and dealt him a blow on the head that forever ended that brave's war-trail.

"There, you confounded fool! you red-rinded heathen!" exclaimed the old chap, rising and placing a foot on the body of the dead Sioux, "you war mistaken in yer man that time—didn't know that Old Tom Rattler, the Red River—"

"Say, old man," interrupted Deerhunter who, having emerged from his retreat, confronted the stranger, "you are not Tom Rattler, the Red River Epidemic are you?"

"I am that very man—Old Thomas Rattler, and I have come down here to spread contagion through these woods. Boy, do you know that I am a full-grown cyclone? an untamed tempest? an Asiatic-cholera Epidemic? Do you know that you'd die with joy to see me let loose with a full head o' electricity and on shock, draw and quarter fourteen red-skins all in one grand—"

His words were cut short by an unearthly yell that came from up the run, and looking in that direction the man and boy beheld fully half a score of savages coming toward them at the top of their speed, their faces the very picture of infuriated demons.

"There are your Ingins, Great Untamed Tempest," said Deerhunter, "and you can shock 'em if you want to, but as for me, I'm going to fall back."

"I guess I'll scatter out, too, and generate some heat to dry my clothes," and the Red River Epidemic, casting a quick glance at the oncoming foe, bounded away with the nimbleness of youth after Deerhunter.

### CHAPTER III.

#### A DASH FOR LIBERTY.

THE presence of the dead savage in the run had fired the breast of the Sioux with a spirit of mad revenge, and they pursued Deerhunter and Old Rattler, yelling like demons possessed.

Old Rattler held his own with the young scout for quite a distance, but finally he began to fall behind, and ere the boy was aware of the fact he had left the old man entirely out of sight. This the youth regretted very much, not only on account of the old man, but the secret he sought regarding the meeting of Neal Gordon with the outlaws and Indians. He was satisfied that Rattler had gained the cover of the log in time to hear all that was said up to the time of his arrival and their precipitation into the creek. Moreover, if the man really was Old Tom Rattler, the noted Red river hunter, he would be an acquisition to the settlers' forces worth a dozen ordinary men in the coming Indian struggle.

When Deerhunter finally discovered that he was no longer being pursued by the red-skins he stopped to rest and listen. He heard the yells of the savages trailing off toward the east, and this continuing made him uneasy for the safety of the old man, and yet alone and unarmed as he now was, the boy felt he could do but little, if anything, in his behalf. But perhaps the old hunter, he finally concluded, was perfectly able to take care of himself, and, for all he knew, had swung off on a tangent to lead the savages from pursuit of him—Deerhunter.

After a few minutes' rest the young scout turned and began retracing his footsteps toward the scene of his night's adventure in order to recover his rifle and accouterments.

He had not gone more than a mile when his ears were greeted by voices off to his right and creeping away in that direction he soon came in sight of half a dozen Sioux in the midst of whom stood that poor, demented wanderer, Simple Sam. To the savages this unfortunate was well known, for his wanderings had extended to the village of Little Crow and the Lower and Yellow Medicine Agencies. They offered him no violence, for there was a superstitious belief among the red-skins, religiously observed, that to harm one bereft of reason was to invoke the wrath of the Great Spirit! yet there were renegades among them who seemed to take a brutal delight in tormenting and teasing the foolish boy.

Resuming his journey as soon as the Indians had left, the simpleton, Deerhunter finally recovered his rifle and then set off through the woods in high hopes of again meeting the redoubtable Old Rattler; but he was compelled to use the utmost precaution for the woods were full of red-skins. He proceeded in an easterly course, as he supposed the Red River Epidemic had gone off that way, and after traveling two or three miles he came to the edge of a large opening over which were scattered a few groups of trees and bushes, and at one side of which was a tiny lake.

Pausing within the shadows of the woods the young scout swept the opening with his eyes and to his surprise discovered a party of savages gathered together out in the opening. They seemed to be laboring under no little excitement for ever and anon a wild yell came from over that way.

"By the sufferin' Job!" the young scout mused. "I'm afraid they have got the Red River Epidemic corralled and if so they'll make it contagious for him. And what can I do to prevent it? I might wade over there and get in a shot or two, but by Jacks! I rather hate to go to shootin' Ingins 'cause they are human beins and I never have shed human blood. But I reckon I'll have to or else git outen this wilderness and that I can't do now for I've taken a job for the season and I'm goin' to stay with it come weal— By Moses! them red heathens have got some one over there sure as shootin'; and I do wonder if it's the old man?"

The Indians were some two miles away and had changed their position so that Deerhunter was enabled to see that they had a captive in their power, but it was not Rattler, but a stranger whom they had come suddenly upon in a clump of trees, just as the man had broke camp and started on horseback in the direction of Red Pine.

He was a man of perhaps five-and-twenty years, with a dark-brown eye, heavy dark mustache, and handsome, intellectual face. He was dressed in a suit of gray, and mounted upon a well-captioned horse that had evidently been ridden long and hard. A pair of saddle-bags hung across the rear of his saddle, where was also lashed a pair of blankets and a gum-coat. A large revolver hung in a holster at the bow of his saddle, but even this he did not attempt to use when the savages pounced down upon him. In fact, he made no resistance or effort to escape them, for he had heard nothing, when at the last settlement he had left, of the Indians being on the war-path. And even when his horse was seized by the bits and half a dozen rifles presented at his breast, he betrayed no fear, and looking the savages in the face, he asked in evident surprise:

"Indians, what does this mean?—surely not violence?"

"Dismount, you are our captive," said one of the savages, who was a white man in Indian disguise; "the Sioux have taken the war-path, and white scalps will hang at their girdles."

"This is news to me," said the man, dismounting, "but, seeing that you are a white man, I shall trust to your influence to protect me from violence."

"I can be responsible but for my own acts," said the renegade-chief, whose name was White Horse; "my braves are already mad for pale-face blood, for



just this morning one of our friends fell at the hands of a pale-face."

"But you must remember that I am a stranger in these parts," said the white man, "and I have never harmed an Indian even in thought."

"Well, we'll have to search you, anyhow," said White Horse, and he deliberately removed the man's saddle-bags from the saddle, while two or three savages proceeded to search the man himself. When the latter got through the captive had been deprived of his personal effects and even his coat and boots.

The renegade had hoped to find something of special value in the saddle-bags but in this he was disappointed.

Nothing but some provisions in one end and some clothing and an old daguerreotype picture in the other rewarded his search.

With an air of disgust he finally thrust everything back into the bags, except the picture, which he placed in an inner pocket of his calico shirt; then turning to his warriors he addressed them a few words in the Sioux dialect when all at once started away across the opening with the captive and his horse.

After traveling half a mile they came to the lake-let heretofore mentioned when a halt was again made under a cluster of trees. The captive was firmly lashed to a tree and his horse tied near by.

About this time two mounted white men rode from the woods south of the opening and joined the savages whose reception told that they were old-time friends.

One of the horsemen was a man of forty years and upward. He was a large, strongly built man with a blotched, bearded face, a cold gray eye, the expression of which was indicative of a cruel, cunning man. His companion was a younger man by ten years.

Both were dressed as men of the border except that they wore heavy, high-topped boots and light colored felt hats. Both were well mounted and well armed.

As soon as they came up they dismounted and after a few remarks and inquisitive glances toward the captive, one of them said:

"My good chief, White Horse, did we not keep our promise like men?"

"You did, Powell, and I have something to show you," replied the chief.

The two stepped aside when White Horse produced the picture he had taken from the fettered captive and handed it to the man Powell.

"By the Olympian gods!" burst from the villain's lips as his eyes fell upon the faces in the picture, "that is the very face of Margaret Oldham and her child Eva! White Horse, did you learn that man's name?"

"The name on his saddle-bags is Frank Parker."

"And he was headed toward Red Pine?"

"Yes."

"He must never reach there, remember that," declared Powell, and his cold gray eyes flashed a menacing look at the captive.

At this juncture the attention of the renegades was attracted by a commotion among the red-skins, and turning they saw it was caused by sight of some one approaching on foot leading an old horse.

"Waugh!" ejaculated the renegade chief, "that's idiot Sam; I wonder where he made the raise of a horse?"

No one advanced to escort the simple boy in under menacing tomahawk, but he was allowed to approach at his leisure, his arrival being hailed with an outburst of laughter from the renegades. They were not amused, however, at the boy for they had all seen him before, but at the sorry-looking old horse he was leading by a piece of frayed rope around the neck.

"What an outlandish old hulk!" exclaimed the man Powell.

"An Aztec ruin," added the other.

"Say, Sam," again put in Powell, "I can count

that horse's ribs; he's been roaming around through the brush ever since Noah turned him out of the ark and he's wore the hair all off his sides. He's got good limbs and a bright eye yet. Say, Sam, how'll you trade him for my horse? You're a trader, arn't you?"

Sam shook his head and laughed in a simple way, then turning he passed his hand in a caressing way over the old horse as if greatly pleased with his possession.

"Say, Cross-eyes," said White Horse to the de-mmented boy, "climb onto yer 'Rabian steed and let's see what kind o' a figger you cut on hossback."

"No—Sam fall off," replied the simple boy.

"Oh, no you won't; I'll hold you on," said White Horse, and advancing the renegade chief caught up the simpleton and threw him astride the old horse's back, with his face toward the animal's tail.

The boy clung to the horse with legs and arms like a frightened monkey, and the sight provoked the red-skins and their allies into an outburst of laughter. In the midst of their cruel sport, Powell suddenly started and pointing up into the thick branches over Simple Sam's head, exclaimed:

"Olympian gods! what's that?"

Every eye save those of Simple Sam was at once raised to the overhanging boughs and there, on a large limb nearly hidden by the dense foliage, lay a man regarding the scene below with startled gaze.

"Tom Rattler, the Red River Epidemic!" burst from the lips of White Horse when his eyes fell upon the man's face.

And Old Rattler the man really was.

A triumphant yell burst from the lips of the red-skins and they drew their knives and tomahawks and began dancing about the old horse in demoniac glee, eager to get at the old pale-face.

"Say, now," said Rattler, rising to a sitting posture, "you compounded hyenas don't want to bust your umbilicals. To be sure, if you want to cheer me that's all right, but you don't want to be too demonstrative with them hatchets and hair-lifters. I never object to a serenade by friends, and—"

"Climb down there, Rattler!" yelled the renegade chief, "and consider your days numbered. We'll serenade you, my gay cavalier. I owe you one for that Pine Hollow affair two years ago, so climb down, or by Heavens your old carcass 'll thump the ground!"

"All right, my fair chief of the red-rinds," replied the old man, "but my back's broke now and I wish you'd have that ejot back up that old razor-back for me to swing down on."

"Back up here, bone-rack," said the outlaw, Powell, backing the horse up a few feet, "and ease that old pilgrim down to mother earth and the scene of his last earthly moments. Whoa!"

With the old horse directly under him, Old Tom Rattler caught hold of a slender limb before him which slowly bent under his weight and, as he swung down, he suddenly dropped astride the old horse in front of Simple Sam, and clutching his arms about the horse's neck, and digging his moccasined heels into his side, he shouted:

"Go, Comet, go!"

Like a frightened bird starting from the grass—like an arrow sped from the bow, that old, antiquated-looking horse shot away with his double burden, knocking the man Powell and a savage or two over in his sudden flight, and ere the astounded and outwitted renegades and savages could comprehend the situation and draw a weapon, Old Rattler, the Red River Epidemic, was a hundred yards away flying like the wind across the opening and shouting back words of defiance to the foe!

## CHAPTER IV.

### A FREE CIRCUS.

INSTANTLY every savage sprung for his rifle and the renegades drew their revolvers when a perfect fusillade was opened on Old Rattler.

Bullets whistled around the borderman and Simple



Sam, the latter still maintaining his position on the horse's back, though he now sat bolt upright and rode like a centaur, his back to that of Old Rattler's and his eyes upon the frantic mob of red-skins.

At every bound the deceptive old horse seemed to gather renewed speed and in a few moments it had placed a clump of trees between its riders and the savages, being guided in its course by the voice of the old man.

Soon the fugitives were beyond the reach of bullets, and then Rattler burst into a peal of rollicking laughter, saying:

"Gal-oriously humbugged! magnificently deceived! I say, *eejot*, you did a blessed thing leadin' old Comet up to that tree; you saved my life and that's why *we're* givin' you a nice free ride. Say, now, doesn't this old fellow buckle down to it in fine style? Don't he skim along like a noble, majestic bird? Isn't he a stupendous hummer? Isn't he an albatross—"

"Say, hold up, old man! I'm bein' split to the throat-latch!"

Old Rattler started as though a serpent had hissed in his ear.

The words issued from the lips of Simple Sam—words that seemed uttered in the clear, musical voice of Deerhunter, the young scout.

"Whoa, Comet!" cried the old borderman, in a tone of wonderment, "and for the love o' Pocahontas's grandmother, let's zamine into that voice we hear."

In obedience to the command the horse stopped, when Rattler's companion rolled from the animal's back to the ground, then springing to his feet, looked up into the borderman's face, his eyes perfectly straight and natural, and the hitherto simple expression of his face vanished into a bright, triumphant smile. *Instead of Simple Sam, it was the young scout, Deerhunter!*

"Great Rosycrusians and ghastly goblins!" burst from the lips of the astounded hunter, "are you a double-gear'd, reversible, compounded institution? Are you *Eejot*, *am*, or that same kitten that laid in the run with me last night?"

"I am your companion of last night—I'm Deerhunter, and—"

"Well, all right," interrupted Rattler, "git on here and let's spin out, for here comes three of them scoundrels after us on horseback."

"Here we go," said the boy, leaping on behind the borderman, and then, as they galloped away, he continued: "I don't want them chaps to know but that I am Simple Sam. I know'd it was most plagued mean to take advantage of poor Sam's infirmities, but when I see'd them red-skins lead that white feller a captive over to the lake there, I made up my mind to help him if I could, and I couldn't resist the temptation to play Simple Sam. I know'd I could do so, for Sam and me are 'bout the same size and build, and once when Kit Redpath got mad at me for playin' him a gentle little trick, he told me I looked like Simple Sam. So, one day, I dressed up rough like Sam, and looked cross-eyed like him, and went into Kit's store, and bless me if he didn't take me for that poor, simple boy and give me some candy and crackers, and I went away, and he never knowed any difference till I told him. So I thought if I could fool Kit I could the red-skins, who ever harm a simple person, and thereby git a chance to help the stranger out. So I turned my cap inside out, and breeches, too, then tied some bark 'round my legs like Sam always does, hid my rifle and things and sailed out. On the way I come across this old horse lyin' in the grass asleep, and I woke him up and concluded to lead him along so he'd help me to entertain the Ingins, and I'd have something to give my attention to and not give myself away. The whole thing turned out pretty well, too."

"Stupendous!" exclaimed Old Rattler; "it was a splendorific job, boy, and I'll bet my moccasins the Indians don't git your hair or you don't go to

state prison for deception, you'll represent Minnesota in Congress afore you're forty. But say, what do you think o' old Comet, anyhow? Isn't he a glider? a flyin'-shuttle? a winged Pegasus? a velvet-footed hummer?"

"Oh, yes! he's a singed cat, like his master," declared the boy.

"I left him and my rifle in this opening last night when I went to follow them Ingins over into the woods, and that's how he happened to be where he was. And if I'd my rifle now I'd show you something that'd make the corners o' your mouth rare up with laughter. Ha! ha! ha! them folks are comin' on a boom; but let 'em slide. I'll bet my off eye that thar isn't a hoss in Minnesota that can flip dirt in Comet's eyes. He's a little thin, and his meteoric speed has by friction worn the hair off his ribs; but he's got the fire and wind for all that—Oh! he's a hummer and no mis'ake!"

Thus conversing, the two rode on across the opening, and entered the woods fully a mile ahead of their three pursuers.

When fairly under cover of the timber Old Rattler turned abruptly to the left and rode westward, keeping close along the edge of the opening.

After traveling a couple of miles in this direction, he turned and boldly rode out into the opening again.

Nothing at this time was to be seen of the mounted bows, for they had entered the timber, and after riding a short ways Rattler drew rein near a cluster of bushes and dismounted, leaving Deerhunter on Comet's back.

Walking into the bushes the old borderman soon returned with a couple of blankets and a strap.

"Them's my saddle, kid," he said, "and if you'll hop ashore I'll trig Comet out for the ring."

The boy dismounted and the blankets were at once strapped upon the old horse. Then Rattler made another trip to the bushes, and returned with a rifle and a cartridge-belt well filled with loaded cartridges. Buckling the belt around him he took up his rifle, and balancing it on his hand, said:

"There, boy, is the machine that flings out cramps. That, lad, is the Original Epidemic herself. She's a new one, too—a new-comer in these parts, and is called a Henry rifle. A trader brought her up from St. Loo for my 'special benefit. D'y'e see this chamber under the barrel here? Sixteen ounce messengers lays in there, ready to be thrown into posish and sent out at the wink of an eye and tetch of a finger to call some red-rind home to glory. I tell you, youngster, she's a clipper—a lily-lipped hummer, and no mistake. Every time she flings a bullet you hear something rip like new cloth—something splatters. And Deerhunter, my kid, I'm goin' to give a free circus in this openin'; you won't have to crawl under the canvas to see how the Red River Epidemic works. Git you a good seat in the edge o' the woods, whar you can see and not be seen, and take in the matinee."

"My own rifle and outfit's not far from this spot," said Deerhunter, "just out in the woods yonder."

"Then make haste and git them, lad, and stand in concealment, and if you see a chance while the show's goin' on to put in a shot, do so. I want you to have a hoss, and I'll try and git one for you. Besides, that man must be rescued from them Ingins down thar, if he hasn't been killed."

"Let me ask you one more question, Rattler, before we part again: did you hear what was said at that Ingin council last night?"

"Every word up to the time we collided. I'll tell you 'bout it after the show's over with."

"All right," said the boy, turning and running toward the timber.

Old Rattler stood by his horse watching his surroundings. It was three miles to where he had left the Indians, and two to where the three mounted outlaws had entered the timber in pursuit of him.

He was expecting the latter to make their appearance at any moment, and in this he was right.



Scarcely had Deerhunter reached the cover of the woods, when White Horse and his two companions rode back into the opening, and catching sight of Old Rattler as they did so, they at once bore down toward him at a lively gait. White Horse in the lead upon the horse belonging to the captive white man.

Old Rattler calmly stood and watched them until they were within a hundred yards of him, then he lightly leaped upon his horse and waving his hand back to his pursuers, sung aloud:

"I kissed Sal, and Sal kissed me,  
When we went circussin' around."

This seemed to render the outlaws all the more furious with rage, and digging their heels into the horses' sides, they urged them into a new burst of speed.

Rattler headed directly toward the Indians over in the opening, but after traveling in this direction for perhaps a mile, he turned abruptly to the right and rode southward, then gradually circling around to the left, was soon riding back in the direction of the point where Deerhunter had disappeared in the woods.

The horse upon which the white chief was mounted was an animal of superior wind and speed, and was soon leading in the chase by a hundred yards or more; but it was no match for old Comet, who, with apparent ease, kept his master at a safe distance from the exasperated enemy.

Finally, when Rattler was nearing the woods, he suddenly drew rein, and slipping to the ground, threw his rifle across Comet's back and raised the hammer. Then glancing along the barrel he touched the trigger, and the weapon rung out on the morning air like a field-gun.

A yell burst from the lips of White Horse, and he dropped forward on the withers of his horse, then started up with a convulsive fling of the body, reeled in the saddle, and, finally, fell to the earth, while his horse dashed on with affright and plunged into the woods.

Powell and his friend drew rein when they saw the renegade chief fall. They were within easy range of Rattler's rifle, but the old borderman was not yet through with his "free circus" and again mounting his horse rode on at a sweeping gallop and was soon riding again in the direction of the Indians who stood watching the performance in wild suspense from their position by the little lake.

To prevent him making another sudden turn to either side, the two outlaws separated, one keeping to the right and one to the left.

Old Rattler seeing their tactics slightly checked the speed of his horse. This enabled the pursuers to come almost abreast of him though beyond revolver shot on either side. In this way the race continued until Rattler was about sixty rods from the Indian. When he suddenly whirled his horse and began doubling on his course, much to the fury and disappointment of the outlaws and savages.

The two white villains, however, were persistent and determined on turning their horses again gave chase to the wily old fox, most of the Indians now joining in with them on foot and yelling like demons.

In a provoking manner Old Rattler waved his hand to the foe as he galloped away, his long white hair whipping in the air like a tattered banner, while a grim smile rested upon his rough, bearded face.

At length, when the outlaw, Powell, had been permitted to come within two hundred yards of Rattler, the latter drew up, again slipped to the ground and again rested his rifle on Comet's back and raised the hammer. The outlaw knew what was coming and stopped his horse so quick that it was thrown back upon its haunches, and while it was in this position the man slipped to the ground and dropped from sight in the grass.

"Oh, that's all right," said the old borderman aloud, "but shoot I will. Whenever I dismount

for Old Epidemic to disgorge a bullet from her system somethin' has got to drop."

Having thus spoken, the old man took aim and fired. The outlaw's horse fell in a heap where he stood, and the outlaw himself took refuge behind the beast's body to escape a similar fate.

The other horseman had by this time also drawn rein, and dropped from his saddle into the grass; nor was he a moment too soon, for again the borderman's rifle rung out, and his horse made a few frantic lunges forward and fell dead.

Rattler was now in one respect master of the situation, but he was far from being out of danger, for several savages were swiftly approaching the scene of the unequal contest; and as most of them were armed with rifles the old man had no desire to linger there, and mounting Comet he galloped away—circling around to the right and again heading toward the lake in hopes of getting in ahead of the savages, all of whom he supposed had left the captive, either dead or alive, to join in the wild chase.

Putting Comet to his very best speed he swept over the plain, and easily got in between the foe and the lake; and he was approaching the clump of trees where the prisoner was confined and congratulating himself upon the success of his maneuvering, when suddenly two savages came bounding from behind the trees and, raising their rifles, fired upon him.

A cry as if of agony burst from the old man's lips, and turning his horse to the left he rode away, reeling upon the animal as though mortally wounded.

The savages, at whom uttering and clutching at his horse's mane, and believing he had been shot by the captive's guard, they uttered a demoniac yell and bounded on in pursuit, expecting him to fall to the earth at any moment.

When some eighty rods in advance of the pursuers the old horse came to a stop, and Rattler was seen to sway to and fro a few times, and then both he and the horse sank to the earth in the grass.

Unearthly screeches now burst from the red-skinned lips and then began a wild, scrambling race for the scalp of the daring foe. They threw aside their rifles, blankets, tomahawks and in fact everything calculated to impede their progress, and with every nerve strung to its utmost tension rushed on—their painted faces contorted and their eyes fairly starting from their sockets.

The captive lashed to the tree near the lakelet was standing erect and had been a witness to most of Old Rattler's "circus," and while he rejoiced at his success in tricking the other "performers" he let no look nor action betray his feelings. When, however, Old Rattler came dashing down toward him, and his two savage guards rushed out and fired upon him, his heart sunk in his breast for he believed the borderman had been wounded; and when he finally saw him and his horse go down, and saw the savages rushing frantically to secure his scalp, he felt certain the old man's days were ended.

Even the captive's two guards left him and joined in the general race after that one scalp, and he gave the fattered man a moment to reflect upon his own situation. A golden opportunity for escape was offered could he but unloose his fetters; and this he tried repeatedly to do, but he had been bound by an Indian in such a manner that his efforts only served to tighten his bonds.

Suddenly he was startled by the report of a gun and a wild savage yell, and looking down across the opening he saw, to his utmost surprise and joy, Old Rattler and his horse rise from the ground behind a little cloud of smoke, and then the next moment he again saw the old horse flying over the plain with his inimical master on his back shouting back defiance to the outwitted and infuriated savages!



## CHAPTER V.

FRANK PARKER'S MISSION TO RED PINE.

OLD RATTLER had played a desperate game to effect the rescue of the stranger from the Indians' power. His pretending to have been wounded by the guard, and, finally, the fall of himself and horse as if in death were tricks quickly conceived to draw the savages far enough from the captive to enable him to sweep around and release the man before they could get back.

He had remained lying in the grass until the foremost savage was within fifty paces of him when he fired and brought the warrior down, momentarily confusing the others; then he spoke to his trained horse and as the animal sprang to his feet the old man leaped upon its back and as he sped away he shouted back, in defiant tones:

"Come on, you red-rinded devils! foller me for I am the way that leads to death and destruction—I'm the Jack-o'-lantern o' death!"

Then he began to gradually circle around the foe and he had but fairly got under way when he discovered two persons mounted upon one horse galloping out from the vicinity of the lake across the opening. They were going westward and, suddenly one of them took off his hat and waved it above his head.

"By the royal Rosycrusians!" burst from the borderman's lips, "that's that boy, Deerhunter! he's caught that dead Injin chief's hoss and while I war circusin' around down here he's slipped around and rescued the captive. By goblins! that's better'n I'd figgered on, and so I'll lean off that way and join 'em. Good-by, red-rinds, good-by, but only for the present. The Epidemic will come ag'in some day, and then many o' you'll curl up with the cramps and join your friends gone before to the happy hunting-grounds."

With these parting words the old fellow galloped across the opening and on the other side near the edge of the timber he joined the Deerhunter and the man, Frank Parker.

"Wal, boy, you got in your work, didn't you?" Rattler exclaimed, his face aglow with excitement and pleasure.

"Yes, Rattler," replied Deerhunter; "and now I have the pleasure of introducing you to Mr. Frank Parker."

"Frank," said the old man, with an air of familiarity, "I'm glad to press your palm. The red-rinds came nigh gittin' in their work on your hair, now didn't they?"

"Yes, sir; and but for you, aided by this boy, they would have succeeded," answered Parker, in a grateful tone.

"Glad to know we've been o' service to you, Frank; but say, boy, how did you like the show?"

"It was a whole circus, Rattler. You and your horse are a pair of dandies—regular stunners!" replied Deerhunter.

"Oh, isn't Comet a hummer, though? Can't he pound the sod in the smackupiest style? And Old Epidemic here—don't she have the clear, music-like ring? Didn't she swat them hosses and them red-rinders in the most approved style? Didn't man, hoss and gun work like things in a novel? Ha! ha! ha! them red-rinds and their white chums must feel smothery in the bosom 'bout this time. They was so sure o' my hair, and came dancin' so fairy-like across the openin', and singin' so like mermaids, that it makes me feel half ashamed of myself, the way I carried on."

"Oh, I'll bet it does!" said Deerhunter. "You're such a timid, blushin' old damsel—you are, Rattler!"

"In view o' the style in which you, Deerhunter, played the simpton on them reds, I'll leave it to this man as to who the dam-sell really is—you or me."

"I must confess," said Parker, amused at the run of words between his rescuers, "that you have both played your parts well; and yet, the most surprising

of all is the sagacity and speed of that horse which the outlaws declared a relic of Noah's ark. Had I been in any other position than I was, I presume I should have enjoyed the performance very much—as well, in fact, as I am now enjoying the outcome of it."

"Stranger, I should observe that you're a newcomer in these parts, eh?" remarked Rattler, as they rode on into the woods at a walk, Deerhunter still keeping his seat behind Parker.

"Yes, sir, I am," replied Parker.

"On your way to Red Pine?"

"I am."

"Got friends there?"

"Not that I know of, but I am in search of friends."

"You can rest assured that you have found a pair of them in me and that old circus there," said Deerhunter.

"Indeed I have, my boy—friends to whom I feel I can talk with safety—in whom I can confide. I assure you I need such friends, too, for now I realize that I have deadly enemies in this country."

"Ah? in that man they called Powell?" exclaimed Old Rattler.

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"I noticed," continued the borderman, "that Powell war a leetle flustered when he came up and looked upon your face."

"I never saw the man before, yet I knew him by the description I had of him," said Parker. "Of course, I might be mistaken as to the fellow, but if he is the one I think he is, his name's not Powell."

"He's a scamp—a royal forest sneak," declared Rattler; "I listened to his lip last night in secret council over here in the woods with a pack o' Ingins, and if your name had been John Reed instead o' Frank Parker, I'd knowed you war enemies."

"Young Parker started and fixing a look upon Old Rattler asked:

"Did you hear that man mention the name of John Reed?"

"It's a Book-o'-Revelation, truth, I did, stranger; but now I see I'm gittin' onto ticklish grounds with you. I don't want to draw anything outen you that don't come willingly."

"Rattler," said Parker in a free, outspoken manner, "I see you know something that I ought to know, and to convince you of it, I'm going to take you two into my confidence and make known to you the secret of my mission into this country."

"All right, stranger," said Old Rattler, "we boys are both lippy as hungry ka-otes, but a secret's as safe with us as our lives."

"Well," began Parker, "my story is a long one, and you will have to be patient. I must go back nearly sixteen years, for then it was that the first events in my story transpired. In far-off New Hampshire, one David Allen lived. He was a bachelor, he was eccentric, he was wealthy, and he was getting along in years. The only relatives he had were two sisters, and these finally died, each leaving a son. The sons' names were James Fenwick and Charles Oldham, and they were heirs apparent to the estate of David Allen."

"At the time of which I speak, James was a man of three-and-twenty years, fairly educated, shrewd and rather energetic, yet inclined to dissipation. He was called a fast young man, and as the boys remarked, 'banked' considerably on his future inheritance. His cousin, Charles Oldham, was an entirely different man. At twenty-one, he married and settled down into a quiet, happy and industrious life. He was very poor, and content to work on as though no fortune awaited him in the near future. While he was greatly disliked by James, he had hosts of friends."

"One night the news spread through Allendale that the beloved old founder of the village, David Allen, had been murdered."

"Strange to say, Charles Oldham was arrested on suspicion of having committed the deed—he having



been the last one known to have visited the old man, who was sick in bed, up to the time the murder was discovered.

"Doctors, in the mean time, had been called in, and they soon discovered that the old man was *not dead*, but unconscious from a blow on the head that had crushed in the skull. The doctors were in doubt as to the result of his injuries, though the chances seemed largely against the old man. In view of this fact, Charles's preliminary examination was postponed one week, and the constable and his deputy at once started with the prisoner to D—, to place him in the county jail for safe-keeping. It was all of ten miles they had to travel, and their road ran through a deep dark woods, and while passing the gloomiest part of this forest, they were stopped by a band of six masked men, and the prisoner taken from them; and that was the last ever seen of Charlie Oldham in that country. A rope with a hangman's noose, and the remains of a fire, in which were found some bones, led to the belief that he had been hung, and then cremated by the mob.

"It was a sad blow to his young wife, so people said, and after one year's widowhood there she took her babe, a pretty little girl, nearly two years old, and left Allendale determined to get away from the scene of her disgrace, and no one there knew whither she had gone.

"But strange as it may seem, David Allen did not die from the effects of his wounds, but then he was worse than dead, for he had been bereft of reason—was a helpless, senseless being. The doctors said it was concussion of the brain. All the past fifty-five years of his life had been blotted out as effectually as though he had died. He knew no more of the attempt on his life than you do. He was a sad and pitiful wreck, walking about, knowing no one, noticing no one. And this continued for fifteen years, when one day the old man fell down-stairs and severely injured his head. The doctor, an eminent surgeon, in dressing his wounds removed some bone-slivers that had been left by the quacks who had attended him fifteen years before, pressing upon his brains, and would you believe it, old David's reason came back to him as though it had just been aroused from a sleep."

"Great Rosycrusians! you don't say?" exclaimed Old Rattler.

"The first thing he inquired for as he started up," continued Parker, "was the villain that struck him—his attempted murderer. You see his mind took up the chain of memory right where it had been broken off by the blow of the murderer's bludgeon."

"When told that fifteen years had elapsed since he was stricken down he could not believe it, and it required much proof to convince him of the terrible fact. When finally told that his nephew, Charles Oldham, had paid the penalty of his murderous work at the hands of a mob, the old man broke down and wept bitterly. 'Charles Oldham did not strike me down,' he said; 'he was in to see me that evening, and as he went out of my room, a man with a masked face leaped out from a closet and struck me down. It was not Charles Oldham—of this I am sure.'

"This left matters in a bad shape for the conscience of the mob that hung an innocent man. Old David thought a great deal of Charles, and but little of James, whose face in fifteen years had become deeply marked with dissipation. From his old and faithful housekeeper, he learned that Charles's wife had taken her child and gone away—no one knew whither. She showed the old man a picture of his wife and little girl and the old fellow went nearly distracted over it.

"But now comes another surprise. One evening a man in disguise called on old David and told him he had a revelation to make to him. He said that Charles Oldham had *not* been hung by a mob, but taken from the officers and permitted to escape, for the mob was made up of warm personal friends of

Charles's old schoolmates who, when they were boys, had taken an oath to stand by each other in the time of danger—who believed him innocent of the crime of attempted murder. Charles went away out West and under an assumed name communicated with his friends, who, in turn, bore the news to his wife. After all had become quiet, Charles's wife went away and no one but the 'mob' knew that she had gone to her husband.

"But the saddest of all was that a year after Mrs. Oldham joined her husband he was killed by redskins and she, poor thing, left a stranger in a wild, savage land with a little child to support. After the death of Charles the 'mob' lost track of his widow and had heard nothing of her up to that time.

"But she or her child must be living somewhere, stranger," said old David; 'don't you think they could be found?'

"If living they can be," the man replied.

"Sir, since you appear to know all about Charles's escape," said the old man, "I am convinced that you are one of his friends—one of the supposed 'mob' that hung him."

"The man acknowledged that he was and told Allen that his name was John Reed. Then Allen offered him a large reward if he would find Charles's family. He said he was getting feeble and that he must soon die, and that he did not desire that James Fenwick should inherit the whole of his fortune, but, if Charles's child Eva was living, and could be found, she should have the bulk of his fortune. Reed promised to make a careful search for Oldham's child, and to aid him in his search, he procured for Reed the likeness of Charles's wife and baby."

"Aha!" exclaimed Old Rattler, "that lik'ness was taken outen *your* pill-bags by them devils down in the opening."

"Yes, that was the very likeness," said Parker.

"And can it be possible that *you* are John Reed?"

"No, sir; John Reed is my uncle, and being unable to travel he intrusted his work to me."

"Exactly; but do you think your gal's at Red Pine?"

"I have every reason to believe she is," said Parker. "I have been on the hunt for her nearly a year off and on. Once, in the mean time, I was called home by the death of old David Allen; but as soon as his will was admitted to probate and it was found that Eva Oldham, daughter of Charles Oldham, was made heir to most of his fortune, I resumed my search for her."

"And you have enemies figgerin' like Old Geometry against you, too," said Rattler.

"I know it now. That man, James Fenwick, is doin' his utmost to thwart me, for John Reed is satisfied that the day he revealed to old David the story of Charles Oldham's escape through the intervention of the supposed mob, James Fenwick stood in the wall of the house and overheard every word that passed, for just as Reed concluded his visit and rose to leave, Fenwick entered unannounced, his face betraying no little emotion. Of course he will get old David's fortune by the terms of the will, should Oldham's child not be found, and Fenwick is villain enough to thwart those trying to find her. If he knew where the girl was he would undoubtedly make way with her as his safest course, but this he does not know unless he found it out lately. I am satisfied, however, that spies have been dogging my footsteps and movements ever since I crossed the Mississippi river. Having no clew as to the whereabouts of the girl themselves they expect to find her by watching me. At least that is my theory. By this time Eva Oldham is a young woman, and even though her mother be dead, too, it will be no trouble to identify her. But I see I'm to have some trouble for that man Powell is—Jim Fenwick."

"Precactly," said Rattler, "and he's got the Ingins and a hull herd o' outlaws to help him. I see into it now, Frank Parker: I laid in a log last night

--boy, you needn't grin, you scamp—and overheard



some talk between your man Powell and a citizen o' Red Pine. That citizen war Powell's tool, spy, or agent. It seems they're on the lookout for that same gal, Eva Oldham, and "citizen" claimed he'd found her in Red Pine. Their plans were to attack Red Pine some night, and while the red-rinds are plunderin' the settlement the gals' to be made away with. But it seems these plans war somewhat interfered with by that 'ere boy, Deerhunter, rushin' into the village with the news o' an Injin uprisin' and puttin' the settlers all on their guard, so that an attack with so small a force would be hopeless, and so they deferred the attack a day or two and dispatched a runner for more warriors. Meanwhile Powell's spy is to try, with the aid of a gang o' cut-throats, to abduct the gal if they can. I hearn Powell say that John Reed had been at Mankato and had the trail. How he learned this I don't know."

"Reed," said Parker, "has not been at Mankato; but if Fenwick has really found Eva Oldham at Red Pine, I wonder why he don't venture into the village himself?"

"Maybe he's afraid the gal's mother'd recognize him and give him away. He's playin' a deep, underhanded game. But, oh! Rosycrusians! if that chap from Red Pine didn't read your title, boy, I don't want a cent. He swore he'd have your life or loss his own in tryin' t' take it. I guess the darned scamp stands pretty well at Red Pine, and when Deerhunter there war selected over him as scout it cut him clear to the gizzard."

"It's a good thing I did," said Deerhunter, "for the settlers, and I'm anxious now to report the result of my scoutin' hereways; and besides, I'd give a dozen beaver-skins to know who Eva Oldham is. There's not a girl in the settlement of even the name of Eva, and I know every girl there, big and little."

"She may go by another name entirely, Deerhunter," said Parker, "for her mother married again, and she may have taken the name of her step-father, whose name I have been unable to ascertain."

"Boys, it's past noon," said Rattler glancing up at the sun, "and how much furdur do you call it to Red Pine, lad?"

"Three miles, I should say," replied Deerhunter. "I'm gittin' hungrier than a pup ka-ote," declared the old borderman, "for I tell you the waste o' caloric has been prodigious with me this morning and I—"

His speech was here cut short by the sharp crack of a rifle in the woods on the right.

At the same moment a cry burst from Frank Parker's lips, there was a convulsive fling of the body and then as he swayed forward in his saddle he gasped out:

"They have killed me!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### DEERHUNTER COVERS THE RETREAT.

A SAVAGE yell followed the report of the rifle, that had sent its leaden messenger tearing through the body of Frank Parker.

Deerhunter, who was still riding behind the man, caught his reeling form and held it in the saddle.

"Great Lord!" cried Old Rattler; "this is a bad mess, boy, and we've got to ride for it! Hold on to the stranger, lad, and I'll lead his hoss."

The old borderman reached out and seized the reins of Parker's horse, and the next moment they were speeding through the forest, while the crash of rifles and the whistle and clipping of bullets among the foliage told of their imminent danger.

Parker clutched at the horn of his saddle for support. His head drooped forward, and despite the strength of Deerhunter, his body swayed from side to side until it seemed he must fall from the saddle.

The hot blood pouring from the wounded man's breast ran down over the boy's arms, that were locked round the reeling form.

"Hold on to him, Deerhunter," said Rattler. "If he falls, them red-rinded yahoes'll git him."

"I'll do my best for him, Rattler," responded the brave boy, whose strength was taxed to its utmost, for his position was a trying one and Parker war rather a heavy man.

"We're leavin' the heathens behind," the old hunter went on, in words of encouragement. "Brace up, Parker, and we'll soon be out of this Hold him up, Deerhunter, a little furdur, and I'll relieve you."

"I'm doin' my best, Rattler," the boy replied, as great drops of perspiration broke from his forehead and ran down over his burning face, that seemed ready to burst with the terrible strain upon every nerve and fiber of his body.

Had it been possible for them to have ridden at the top of their horses' speed they would soon have been out of danger; but this was impossible, owing to the density of the timber and the difficulty in supporting Parker.

However, they finally emerged into a wagon-road, leading around to Red Pine, and then they rode faster.

But Old Rattler saw that Deerhunter's strength, plucky as he was, was failing and drawing rein, he said:

"Boy, somethin' else's got to be done. We'll have to tie him in the saddle."

As he spoke Rattler leaped to the ground, jerked the lariat from Parker's saddle-bow, tied one end of it around the man's right leg above the knee then passed it under the horse's belly and drawing it tight secured it to his left leg above the knee.

Parker was bleeding profusely and though still conscious his words were spoken in great agony. He seemed fully aware of their danger and with all his failing strength clung to the saddle-bow.

Remounting his horse Old Rattler took hold of the man's shoulder to steady him, saying to Deerhunter as he did so:

"Boy, rest yourself a moment—ah! the red devils are crowdin' us close—too close for comfort and health, boy! We'll have to fight yet, afore we—"

"Fight it is," said Deerhunter, slipping from the horse and unslinging his rifle from his back.

The savages were not in the road but at the side, dodging from tree to tree Indian like, fearing even to expose their bodies to the eyes of the fleeing fugitives.

They, however, regarded Deerhunter's movements with a defiant yell, but raising the hammer of his gun the boy began running backward keeping his eye upon a red-skin on the left and his rifle at a trail. In this way the young scout had retreated perhaps fifty paces when suddenly—with the quickness of a flash—he threw up his gun and, scarcely had it touched his shoulder, when it rung out. To a casual observer it would have seemed a premature discharge, but it did not seem so to the savage who fell to his knees—started up again and reeling to one side dropped out of the chase.

Deerhunter saw the result of his shot with a pang of regret mingled with his feelings of triumph. It was the first time he had ever raised a weapon against a human being, and it was only a clear knowledge of the fact that it was justifiable that nerved him for a repetition of the act.

Turning he ran after his friends as fast as he could go, loading his rifle as he ran. He carried his powder in a flat metallic pocket flask to which was a charger opening and closing with a spring. In a little pouch on the inside of his hunting-jacket he carried his bullets, and in another his gun-caps.

In a remarkably short space of time he had reloaded his weapon while on a keen run—an achievement he had attained, along with his skill in shooting game on the wing, in his years of experience as a deer-hunter.



The Indians were wildly enraged by the fall of their friend and they renewed their efforts to overtake the whites, though they still kept on either side of the road and dodging among the trees, withholding their fire until they could make sure of their aim.

At length, Deerhunter turned again and with his gun at a trail began running backward. The Indians had already learned by experience the tactics of the boy and quickly vanished behind trees, each of the half-score of painted wretches fearing that he was to be the object of the young scout's next shot. And while thus driven to cover they made the best of it and fired upon the young foe. Their bullets went hurtling around him—some striking the earth so close that dirt and dust were dashed into his face. Yet he stood unharmed seeming to bear a charmed life if there be such a favor awarded any one in the dispensation of Providence. Close as the foe were it seemed miraculous at any rate, that he should have escaped the bullets of the half-score of guns focused upon him. Had it been otherwise, however, this story would never have been written.

As soon as the red-skins fired they broke from their coverts and made for others on before them. But the keen eyes of the young scout were on the watch and at the first glimpse of the nearest moving form, his rifle flew to his shoulder and another "wing" shot was made. But the boy did not cast a second glance toward the object of his aim for he had too much faith in his skill as a rifleman to inquire after the result of his shot, but turned and ran on up the road after his friends, reloading his rifle as he did so.

Finally he debouched into a strip of open prairie beyond which lay the cultivated fields of the Red Pine settlers. Here, he felt satisfied, the Indians would make a last desperate effort by rushing from their covert in a body upon him.

Old Rattler, who with Parker was some forty rods in advance, entertained the same idea, and, anxious about the lad's safety, drew rein and glanced back down the road.

By this time Parker had somewhat recovered from the first shock of the enemy's bullet, and was enabled to support himself in the saddle. He even noticed Rattler's uneasiness, and inquired:

"How goes it with the boy, Rattler?"

A savage yell and the crash of guns answered him.

The Indians had rushed to the edge of the woods, and just as the lad turned to fire upon them their rifles rung out.

Again Deerhunter heard their bullets scream through the air around him, and amid the noise he received a vicious blow across the forehead that staggered him and brought him down upon his knees.

It stung like the sharp cut of a whip-lash, and quickly raising his hand, passed it over his brow and then glanced at his fingers. They were bloody. Red drops began rolling down his cheek. A bullet had grazed his forehead.

With a wild, fiendish yell the Sioux burst from the woods.

"Great goblins!" cried Old Rattler, "the boy's down, Parker! Ride on! slowly. I must help him!"

Turning his horse, the old borderman started to the lad's assistance.

Deerhunter, while still upon his knees, brought his rifle to bear upon the foremost red-skin, and as he arose to flee, a bullet went screaming through the air over his head from the rifle of Old Rattler, and at the same time he heard the old man shout:

"Fall back, boy, and give Old Epidemic a clear field! Stand aside, and see a pestilence strike them red-rinders and—Ah! the yahoos scent destruction and humble themselves in the dust!"

The last words were occasioned by the savages throwing themselves flat upon the earth in the grass to escape the bullets of Old Rattler.

Deerhunter fell back and the old man advanced until the two met.

"Great Rosycrasians!" exclaimed the borderman, as his eyes fell upon the blood-stained face of the boy, "the devils have shot a chunk outen you, boy!"

"I got a welt, that's sure, Rattler, but the demons have paid well for it. But, look yander! you can see the hands of the varmints bobbin' up once in awhile, and I'll bet they're reloading their rifles. I'm goin' to hamstring one of them."

Having reloaded his rifle the boy raised the weapon and fired. To the great delight of Old Rattler a red-skin was seen to fairly bounce into the air, and then before his death-yell had died on the air, his companions sprang to their feet and fled back to the woods, Old Epidemic firing upon them as long as a savage could be seen.

"Victory! glory!" shouted Rattler at the top of his lungs, "and you, boy, are the cause of it. I'll swear, Deerhunter, you covered our retreat with the skill o' old Nap Bonaparte. You're a young stem-winder, lad—a kiddy cyclone—a hull gang o' destruction. I'm not ashamed to associate with you—come along, my little pony, and let's foller Parker up. He's a fearfully wounded man."

They turned and hurried on after the young man, Old Rattler walking and leading his horse. Before they came up with Parker they were met by half a dozen armed settlers, who, having heard the firing off in that direction, had hastened to the scene of conflict.

"You're too late, folks," said Old Rattler; "this 'Lrat, Deerhunter, licked the hull caboodle o' red-rinded yahoos, sendin' some o' them to purgatory and the rest howlin' into the wilderness."

## CHAPTER VII.

### PREPARATIONS FOR DEFENSE.

WITHIN an hour after Deerhunter had taken his departure from Red Pine to act in the capacity of scout, the settlers agreed upon plans of defense and that was the erection of a stockade.

A committee was appointed to select a location for the defense, and while it was out, the question of Deerhunter's ability to perform the duties of scout alone came up. Kit Redpath being out on the committee Deerhunter's side was minus its strongest advocate. No one questioned the brave boy's qualifications, but it seemed the task was altogether to great for him, and the result was that Neal Gordon was also employed as a scout and the young man at once took his departure into the woods.

This was exactly what Gordon desired. It would afford him an opportunity to come and go at pleasure and keep his friend Powell and his savage allies posted as to the movement of the settlers. As to Deerhunter, the smooth-tongued villain made up his mind to put the boy out of his way at the first opportunity, and then have a clear field all to himself.

The committee on location selected the lot upon which Squire Hawkins's house stood for a defense for several reasons: the spot was an elevated piece of ground; the squire's house was a two-story, log structure which, being in the center of the stockade, would answer for a lookout from above and a refuge for the women and children below; besides there was an inexhaustible well of good water at the door.

Of course the squire was only too glad to have his house thus protected, and so the preliminaries were soon arranged and the work begun.

The ring of axes, the crash of falling trees, and the shouts of the teamsters drawing in the logs soon told of the energy with which the work was being prosecuted. And while some were thus engaged others were busy digging a continuous trench into which logs fifteen feet in length were set on end side by side and securely planted.

Captain Swank had charge of the work which did not cease with the going down of the sun. Late into the night the labor went on by the light of the



lanterns carried by the children and in the glow of low fires fed by pine-knots and chips; then was had a few hours' rest and sleep, a hasty breakfast and the work was resumed.

About daylight Neal Gordon made a flying trip into the village and reported that all east and west of the village was yet clear of foes, but the adroit villain made no report as to the north, claiming that Deerhunter being off on that side, would see that no danger approached from that direction. And in this he was right, although he never believed the boy would return to the village alive, the savages being on the watch for him. In the mean time, a duty had been assigned to the women, and young boys who were unable to assist at the stockade, and that was the removal of the effects of each household inside the proposed defense. This was no small job, for several of the families lived over a mile away, but with the heroism characteristic of the border they went about their labor. A team was placed at their command and they at once started out to bring in the effects of those living the furthest away first.

Amid the work that was going on all around there was one person whose coming and going in the discharge of various duties seemed to fill every heart with sunshine and encouragement, and that was Kitty Hawkins, the squire's young daughter. She was a pretty dark-eyed girl of eighteen summers, possessed of a happy, vivacious spirit, and whether assisting her lady friends, or carrying water to the choppers thirsting and sweltering in the sultry woods, she was always the same bright, merry-hearted girl. Her smiles and her voice seemed to lighten the labor and strengthen the courage of her friends; and yet she was unconscious of this mystic influence. She affected nothing. Her young heart was innocent of guile. She possessed all that was pure, lovely and angelic in perfect womanhood.

Neal Gordon, all said and believed, was in love with Kitty, but if she thought more of him than any other youth, especially Deerhunter, she succeeded most admirably in concealing it.

During his morning visit to the settlement Gordon chanced to meet Kitty alone in her father's house, and said to her:

"Kitty, you seem to be in your usual good spirits."

"And why not, Mr. Gordon?" was the maiden's reply.

"All people are not constituted alike," he went on, "for while you appear the same, all the rest of the settlement is in wild excitement."

"Yes, this is a trying time, Mr. Gordon, and I assure you that I fully realize our danger, but what good will worrying do? I consider our safety has been intrusted to two brave and excellent scouts."

"Thanks for the compliment," said the unblushing young traitor, "but I have heard incidentally, Kitty, that you have witnessed the horrors of Indian warfare before."

"Indeed? From whom did you hear that?"

Gordon smiled, and in a tone calculated to appear evasive, said:

"Oh, I often hear things said now and then, but, while I remember the words, I forget the author. I heard at the same time that 'Squire Hawkins was only your step-father.'"

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Kitty, somewhat surprised; "but to tell you the truth, Neal, the murderous hands of savages once made me fatherless; but now 'Squire Hawkins is a good, kind father to me and I love and respect him.'"

"She is Eva Oldham, as I suspected," Gordon said to himself; "but dare I ask her more?—what she knows of her father being a fugitive from justice?—why she goes by the name of Kitty Hawkins instead of the name of Eva Oldham?"

Before the scheming young villain could settle these questions in his mind Kitty's mother, a fair-faced woman of perhaps forty years, entered the room and so he asked no further questions, but soon took his departure, brooding over the conflicting

emotions that now disturbed his peace of mind. The fellow really loved Kitty and flattered himself that he was loved, and then when he remembered that he was, to a certain extent, in the power of Fenton Powell, he began to feel aggrieved at his situation. He could see no reason why, except for Powell, he should not win Kitty's love and hand fairly, and protect her life as well as her rights as against the scheming of Powell.

The future held out flattering promises to him, barring his compact with Powell, but when his mind reverted to the past a skeleton confronted him and the happy vision vanished. He saw that he must reap as he had sown—that the way of the transgressor was hard.

After carefully looking over the work that was progressing so nicely on the stockade, the traitor-scout again took his departure.

Busily the bees all hands worked away at their defense. The sun came, and they stopped for only a few minutes to eat dinner.

Shortly after noon, they were startled by the report of firearms off to the north, and with blanched faces they stopped their labor to listen.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Captain Swank, "there's 'Ingins' that way and somebody's in a fight with them!"

Six armed men were at once dispatched in the direction of the sound of conflict to assist whomsoever might be in trouble, and but little work, except the preparing of firearms for instant use, should they be needed, was done until the cause of the alarm was known. They did not have long to wait, however, for the rescuing party returned, bringing with them, Deerhunter, Old Rattler, and the wounded Frank Parker.

The Boy Scout's return was hailed with joy, though his face, wounded, bloody, and covered with dust, was at first unrecognized by several of his intimate friends.

From the back of old Comet, Deerhunter informed the excited settlers that dangers were gathering around Red Pine; and also briefly narrated his and Old Rattler's adventures. But he kept the secret of Neal Gordon's treachery to himself, for fear the villain had friends within hearing, that would put him upon his guard before he could be arrested.

Old Rattler met with a warm reception, and he and Deerhunter were invited to a sumptuous repast at Joe Randall's cabin, the Boy Scout having first had his wounded forehead washed and dressed by kind hands.

Meanwhile, Frank Parker had been taken to 'Squire Hawkins's house, and the doctor called in. Upon examination it was found that the young man had been shot through the right lung, and the doctor pronounced his case a very serious if not hopeless one.

After learning this, Deerhunter and Old Rattler held a private consultation to determine what they should do in relation to Frank Parker's mission to Red Pine. They had no idea who the persons were he sought, and should the young man die without having brought the matter to the attention of the parties themselves, providing they were in Red Pine, they were afraid Powell and his minions might succeed in their villainy. But they were unable to determine what was best to do in the premises, and finally concluded to let the matter rest until Gordon had been secured.

To Kit Redpath and Captain Swank they revealed the secret of Neal Gordon's meeting with the Indians and outlaws the night before. At first the settlers could not believe the startling story, but when Deerhunter declared it was so, and Old Rattler asserted it "was the clear, compound, Book-o'-Revelation truth," they were compelled to accept the story as true.

And the news greatly increased Swank's fears for the safety of the place, and he at once began urging forward the work with renewed energy, though,







man tried to pass but Swank caught him by the arm and stopped him. A third man he knocked down with his rifle. Others came to the captain's assistance. "The tide was stayed and the axmen rallied."

By this time the savages were in the opening and Swank having formed his men, now nearly two-score strong, in line, ordered them to fire, and in obedience thereto the crash of their rifles and their double-barreled shot-guns loaded with double charges of buck-shot seemed to rend the very air.

It was a deadly fusillade, and even more destructive than surprising to the savages, who wavered, stopped, and then hastily fell back: for the Indian cannot stand an open-field fight, nor will he risk one unless absolutely sure of victory.

The settlers, who but a few moments before were fleeing in terror, could now scarcely be restrained from rushing madly in pursuit of the savages. There was not a coward among them, and yet that mysterious power that sometimes takes possession of great armies and hurls them panic-stricken to disgrace and death, had seized upon the axmen and sent them flying before the foe.

But now that the tide had turned, they felt keenly the disgrace of their conduct, and would have sacrificed their lives to wipe out that disgrace.

When the savages broke for the cover of the woods, Old Rattler sent a few parting shots after them, yelling at the top of his lungs:

"Go it, you red-rind devils! Skedad, you compounded cowards! Yoo-peel! Jump into another panic-trap, will ye? Undertak to run down another epidemic, will ye? Go it, you sin-colored demons!"

"I say, old moose-lungs," said Captain Swank, his face aglow with triumph, "seems to me to be a slashin' good retreat!"

"Bet your sweet old soul on that, captain," responded Rattler, "for that's the way I most alers fight. I'm no old fool 'bout runnin' after a fight; but when a fight runs after me, then you can gamble somethin' got to tear like rotten buckskin. Put me on my horse Comet, with Epidemic here in my hands, and get me in full retreat, at a I'll go you my off optic that I can lick forty-seven red-rinds inside o' a five-mile panic, if I have open ground. Them's my tactics, captain, and it's De'r hunter's, too. Oh! if you'd seen that charmin' young dare-devil cover our retreat to-day, comin' in from the north, it'd 'a' melted you all up into briny tears o' delight. You see, we fellers just now dashed over here like as if we war all broke up, but we did that in order to draw the red-skins into ambush, and it worked like a charm, captain."

Old Rattler's story served a good purpose in quieting the upbraiding conscience of the axmen, but it involved Captain Swank in the ridiculous position of having to make an apology to the man he had knocked down, or openly dispute the truthfulness of Rattler's word. Seeing, however, the object of the old man's story, the captain made the apology, and as he did so, Rattler said, with a facetious grin: "You got a leetle excited, captain, and it's a wonder a panic didn't ensue."

"Darn your old eyes, Rattler," said Swank to the borderman, when they were alone a few moments later, "you played that tongue o' yours well—made them choppers out the heroes, and me the panic-stricken bell-weather. You are an old galvanizer, ar'n't you?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Rattler; "thar's nothin' like doin' the greatest good to the greatest number, accordin' to Skripter. You see I can read human natur' as easy as you read your Bible. I knowed you could stand it by the way the tobakker-juice loiters on your classic chin, and by the graceful style in which you wear one pants-leg in your boot-top and the other down, and by the billowy ease with which your shirt foams up over your waistband, and by the darin', reckless, Napofonic manner in which you trust your barn-door breeches to the support o' one lonely, Congo-citizen colored suspender."

All these are signs that indicate a sweet, child-like disposition, a constitutional lover o' ease and recklessness darin', and a big, brave heart."

Captain Swank could not suppress an outburst of laughter at the words, truthful ones, too, of the rollicking, whimsical old borderman; for he saw that Rattler was a man after his own heart and at once received him into full fellowship and, arm in arm, they walked into Redpath's store and there to their "eternal friendship," drank royal "bumper."

As they came out of the store they were met by Deerhunter, the Boy Scout, whose excited face told them that some new danger was hanging over Red Pine.

## CHAPTER IX.

### KITTY HAWKINS'S HEROISM.

HALF a mile from Red Pine, going by land, o' eighty rods straight across the corner of Lake Shetek, stood the humble cabin of Timothy Bain and considering it the least exposed of all the homes to any distance from the village proper, the removal of its household effects had been deferred until the very last.

Mr. Bain and his daughter Dorothy composed the family, Mrs. Bain having died some two years previous; so, that while the father was assisting his neighbors on the stockade, the daughter was assisting her lady friends in removing their household effects to the defense. And it was late in the afternoon when a team was sent to the Bain cabin for the goods. Dorothy, accompanied by her young friend, Kitty Hawkins, going across the corner of the lake in a canoe to assist in loading the wagon.

Dorothy Bain was a slender, blue-eyed girl of perhaps eighteen years, with a graceful form, light, golden hair and a sweet sunny temperament. She was possessed of so many noble qualities and such purity of mind and heart as to greatly endear her to all whom she chanced to meet.

After reaching the cabin, which stood but a few rods from the lake-shore, it required but a few minutes to load the team and start it on its way, while the girls, carrying a bundle of clothing and a miniature trunk containing Dorothy's jewels and trinkets, proceeded to the canoe by means of which they calculated to return to the village. Placing the bundle and trunk in the craft they seated themselves and Dorothy took up the paddle. Just then some one called to them.

They turned their heads and saw a man come limping along the lake-shore toward them. He was an elderly man dressed in a border settler's suit and was rough in appearance, his face being covered with a grizzled beard and his head with long unkempt hair. He seemed tired and worn and his blood-shot eyes and haggard face told that he had been undergoing great physical exertion and suffering.

"For the love of our Redeemer, gals," the man said, in a tone of distress as he dragged himself along to the boat, "can't you give a poor, weary devil a ride?"

"We don't know you, sir," promptly replied Kitty.

"I'm Rube Bunker, from New Ulm," the old man said, drawing his sleeve across his brow to wipe away the beads of perspiration; "the Ingins have killed everybody over there but me, and I only escaped by a hair's breadth. I've been tryin' to reach Red Pine these two days and nights, and I'm nearer dead than alive."

"You are almost there now, Mr. Bunker," said Kitty, feeling loth to take the old stranger into the boat.

"So I see; but it'll be hard for me to make it afoot. I'm 'bout gone, gais."

"Then you take the canoe and we will walk," said Kitty.

"N never; Rube Bunker's too much of a man for that," said the old fellow with an air of gal-



lantry; "go ahead, gals, and I'll try and hobble through; if the red-skins do git me they won't git much."

"Mr. Bunker," said Dorothy, touched by the old man's words, "there is room in the boat for you. Step in and we will carry you to our friends."

"Thank you, thank you," murmured the old fellow, as with some effort he scrambled into the boat and seated himself with his face to Dorothy and his back to Kitty.

As he did so the latter saw the polished butt of a revolver in his belt, exposed by the disarrangement of the skirts of his coat.

"Shan't I paddle the boat for you?" Bunker asked, and without waiting for an answer he deliberately reached forward and took the paddle out of Dorothy's hands, saying: "My arms are stronger'n yours; besides, I want to work my passage."

With this he dipped the blade and drove the canoe out into the lake, and with strong, vigorous strokes sent it plying through the waters, going directly eastward.

"You will please bear a little to the left, Mr. Bunker," said Dorothy, seeing he was falling out of the exact course.

"Lord! what was that?" the old fellow suddenly exclaimed, as the blasts of a horn came leaping across the water.

The girls started, their faces blanched with terror. Bunker ceased paddling, and the three listened.

A few moments later savage yells came piercing through the air.

"My God, Kitty!" cried Dorothy, "the Indians have attacked our friends!"

"I'm afraid so," said Kitty, seriously.

"Yes, sure'n thunder they have," said Bunker; "and we'd better tarry a moment till we know what the result is. Don't be worried, girls, for if anything happens you've a friend in Old Rube Bunker."

The boat stood upon the placid waters and the three listened. They heard the sounds of a sharp conflict going on, but it lasted only for a few minutes then all became silent.

"The fight has ended, but who's victors?" said Bunker.

"Our folks, to be sure," said Kitty; "if the Indians had won they would not have ceased their yells so soon."

"I don't know 'bout that," said Bunker, "and I ruther think we'd better pull off down to that island yander and wait," and the man turned the canoe and started toward the island over forty rods out of the course without waiting to consult the feelings of the girls.

"I object to that, don't you, Dorothy?" said Kitty, giving her friend a look over the old man's shoulder that fairly startled her.

"Yes, I can see no reason why we cannot remain where we are awhile longer, at least," declared Dorothy.

"We're in open water here and if the Ingins git sight of us they'll git us in hot water. If I git onto that island and you gals want to go on you can do so, I reckon."

There was something in the man's words and the look that accompanied them that almost froze the blood in Dorothy's veins. Kitty could not see his face, but his words aroused a spirit of indignation within her breast; but she controlled her tongue, though it was an effort for her to do so, for she had made up her mind now that Rube Bunker was a villain or else a very rude and selfish creature. She did not like the looks of him from the first, and, but for Dorothy, to whom the canoe belonged, she would never have consented to his entering it.

"Why, Mr. Bunker," Kitty finally asked, "will you take us to the island against our will?"

"I'm an old borderman, gal, and think I know what is best in the face of sich dangers," was his answer, as he plied the paddle with all his strength.

The island was finally reached, and Bunker sprang

ashore and pulled the craft partly on the beach. As he arose from his seat his revolver dropped from his belt and fell at Kitty's feet, and with a motion quick as that of a cat the girl picked it up and concealed it unobserved by either of her companions.

Bunker took the paddle ashore with him, and the girls now noticed that his haggard, tired look and even his lameness had vanished. This convinced the more mistrustful Kitty that there was something wrong, but she calmly made up her mind to abide results. She was not at all afraid of the man, now that she possessed a weapon, and one that she knew how to use. And, furthermore, she had the nerve and courage to use it should it be necessary to do so.

Bunker finally missed his revolver, and, after fumbling about his belt, came and looked into the canoe.

"Have you lost anything, Mr. Bunker?" Kitty asked, looking up into his face in all innocence.

"Yes, my pistol," replied the man "dam the luck, I reckon it worked out of my belt and fell overboard. If an Ingind come along now I wouldn't have even a knife to defend us with."

"Oh, that is too bad!" said Kitty, regretfully.

For fully an hour they tarried at the island, Dorothy grew uneasy and restless, while Kitty seemed to take the situation with quiet contentment, chatting freely with Bunker as she watched the myriads of little minnows swarming in the water around the boat.

Finally Bunker said:

"Well, the sun's jist down, and I reckon it 'll be safe to venture out n.w."

"Yes, I presume so," answered Kitty.

The man stepped into the boat and took the same position as before, then, with the paddle against the bank, he pushed off into the water, and soon they were afloat again upon the lake. But instead of heading northward toward Red Pine, he headed southward, where the shores of the lake were lined with aspen and the willows.

"Where are you going, Mr. Bunker?" Kitty asked: "this is not our course."

"It's my course, gals," replied the man; "you see I've fell into love with you little angels and I'm goin' to run away with you."

A cry of despair burst from Dorothy's lips. She now began to realize the truth to which her kindness of heart had blinded her: the man was a villain!

"Say, Mr. Bunker," suddenly exclaimed Kitty, "I want you to get out of this boat at once! you're an outlaw!"

Bunker laughed in a cold, harsh manner.

"I mean what I say," said Kitty, shoving the fellow's own revolver against his jaw and cocking it, the click of the rising hammer startling the villain as though it were a serpent's hiss.

"Be keerful, girl!" he exclaimed glancing back over his shoulder.

"I will not—I will kill you dead!—I will blow your head off if you offer to touch me!" Kitty cried, her spirit fully aroused to the danger of the situation.

"Girl, are you a fool? are you a young she demon?" the man exclaimed.

"Yes," she fairly hissed, "and you'll find I mean to carry out my will. If you dare turn toward me—if you dare raise a hand, I will fire! I mistrust you from the first and have nerved myself to kill you unless you leave this canoe. I know how to shoot, man, and true as there is a God above, I will unless you—"

The fellow threw up his hand and grasped the revolver by the muzzle and attempted to jerk it from the girl's fingers, but as he did so the weapon went off and a groan of agony burst from Bunker's lips. The ball tore through the fellow's hand, lacerating it in a fearful manner, and before he could rise to his feet the girl had the weapon leveled upon him again.

Frightful curses broke from the man's lips. He reared over and thrust his mangled hand into the water for relief from the awful pain.



"I told you—I warned you, Mr. Bunker," said Kitty in a firm, resolute tone, "and now I warn you again that you must leave this boat or I will shoot you through the back."

"Then take me to that little island and I'll get out, the fellow said."

"No, we will do no such thing," replied Kitty; "you have got to jump out right here."

"My God! you are a wild murderess, girl!"

"Yes," Kitty said; "I have no mercy for one like you. I command you to rise to your feet and leap into the lake and swim to the island or drown."

"I cannot swim a lick—not a lick," declared Bunker.

"I don't care—I want you to get out at once," Kitty said, in a tone that told her patience was wearing out. "Rise to your feet and leap clear of the boat and if you turn this way, or attempt to upset the canoe, I will take either for a signal for me to shoot."

"Girl, I will drown sure as death," he protested, "and if I do I will haunt you whether you're awake or asleep, all your life—I will stare up from the watery depths of this lake with ghastly face and glassy eyes into your soul day and night. I will make your life a hell on earth."

"I don't care, I am bound you shall get out, and I won't wait another minute—not another minute!" And she meant what she said.

"All right, young demoness, here goes," said Bunker rising to his feet and leaping out into the lake. It was a bitter dose for him to swallow. He sunk from view in the water but soon arose to the surface and struck out toward the island, swimming like a fish.

"Now, Dorothy, let us flee," said the heroic Kitty.

"The paddle, Kitty—where is it?"

Kitty's face assumed a look of utter amazement and for a moment it seemed her splendid courage would give way. But mastering her emotions and stifling her disappointment, she glanced after Bunker, saying:

"What a blunder, Dorothy, to let him escape with the paddle."

"It is too bad, Kitty; I might have thought of that," said Dorothy.

"Well, we're rid of that man anyhow, and that is considerable. Let us trust to the wind to drift us ashore. It will soon be dark and I think a breeze will rise then. Perhaps we can paddle along a little with our hands."

"Oh, I'll tell you," suddenly exclaimed Dorothy, and opening her little trunk she took therefrom an oblong hand-mirror; "why will this not do for a paddle?"

"It will spoil it, Dorothy," said Kitty.

"Well, it will be no great loss;" and Dorothy began plying her mirror as a paddle with no small degree of success.

They headed toward the southwest, the nearest point now to the shore, but darkness had set in long before they had reached a landing. When they did, however, they concealed Dorothy's trunk and bundles, and then set out for Red Pine, now fully two miles away.

The darkness in the woods was intense, but by keeping in sight of the lake, the maidens were enabled to make their way along, though they traveled slowly.

Ever and anon they stopped to listen. But no sound save the dull droning of insect wings and that dreary moan of the wilderness after nightfall came to their ears. To one versed in the lore of the woods, this silence would have been regarded with uneasiness. The hushed voices of all animate nature in the deep, dark woods boded the presence of danger, but of this the maidens were ignorant; and ere half the distance to Red Pine had been made, they were suddenly startled by the sound of pursuing feet.

Grasping each other's hands, the girls started on a run. In rounding the spur of a little hill they came suddenly in sight of a great, roaring camp-fire a few rods away.

They stopped short at sight of it. They saw a single person seated at the fire, and at a glance recognized him as Simple Sam. The foolish boy built a great fire under the dark-green pines, with a long pole sat punching the logs and watching the millions of sparks that went dancing up the dome of purple darkness, ever and anon uttering a wild, silly laugh.

"We have nothing to fear from him, Kitty," Dorothy.

"Nor anything to expect of him in the way of help," replied Kitty; "unless he can tell us some place to hide from those unknown pursuers."

They ran on and stopped by the fire. Simple Sam looked up uttering a strange cry.

"Oh, Sam!" cried Kitty, "the Indians are after us! Can't you show us where we can hide if them?"

"Yes—there," and the foolish boy pointed toward a dense thicket on ahead of them.

The girls ran on and entered the thicket.

Scarcely were they out of sight ere Old Bunker with his wounded hand in a sling, rushed from darkness into the glow of the fire, followed by a white man and nearly a score of Indians.

"Say, Simpleton!" yelled the enraged Bunker panting like a worried ox, "have you seen two go this way? Tell me, quick, or I'll blow your fool head off!"

"There," said the simple boy pointing in the very direction the fugitives had gone.

Like hounds on the trail of a deer the demon pack lunged across the light and plunged into the thicket.

A moment or two later the bark of a revolver groaned, a savage yell and a shriek came from the depths of the undergrowth.

And still a few moments later, the savages emerged from the darkness bringing with them in the light of the simple boy's camp-fire, the two girls and the lifeless body of Rube Bunker!

## CHAPTER X.

### DEERHUNTER'S "EYE-DUSTER."

"GREAT Rosycrusians! what is the matter, boy?" exclaimed Old Rattler, as he and Captain Swank emerged from Redpath's store and entered the boy in the dooryard.

"Kitty Hawkins and Dorothy Bain are missing!" the boy found breath to answer.

"Great goblins! you don't tell me?" exclaimed Rattler.

"Oh Lord!" groaned Swank.

"They went over to Mr. Bain's cabin two hours ago after the things and they haven't returned. The team has been back an hour, and the girls were comin' across the lake in a canoe but as they're not back I'm afraid they're in trouble."

"Like as not," said Rattler, "and I reckon you and me 'll have to go and hunt 'em up."

"Yes, and the sooner the better," declared Deerhunter, "for the savages are gradually surrounding Red Pine. And, furthermore, just learned from overhearin' a conversation out in the woods between an Indian chief and a white man, that Dandy Bill, the Canadian outlaw, and his band of cut-throats are with the savages. When I heard your firm' over here, I hustled in to get to help you, but was a little too late."

"Plenty time yet, boy," said Rattler; "but let's run in and see how our friend Parker gettin' along, and then I'll be ready to go with you in search for the gals."



They hurried inside the now completed stockade and made their way to Squire Hawkins's house, where they were met by the squire and his good wife, who were almost distracted over the absence of Kitty; but the two scouts assured them that the girls should be found, and they passed on into the room where Parker lay. They found the young man resting easier, and the doctor told them now that if his patient's will-power was as strong as his constitution, he might pull through.

Leaving the defense, the two scouts made their way around the lake to Timothy Bain's cabin. They found where the girls had landed and embarked in the canoe; and they also found moccasin tracks pointing toward and disappearing at the water's edge, where the canoe had left the beach.

"That tells the tale," said Deerhunter, pointing to the tracks in the sand.

"Yes, and it's a white man's track. The toes turn outward instead of inward as a red-skin's allers do," said Rattler.

"So much the worse for the girls if they are in the power of a white villain," declared the young scout.

"Yes, if he should be one o' that Canadian outlaw's gang."

"Just as likely to be as not."

"Then that scoundrel, Gordon, and villain, Powell, must have had somethin' to do with their abduction."

"Then who knows but one of the girls is Eva Oldham, of whom Frank Parker is in search? But surely that can't be."

"Nothin' impossible, boy. If Parker had only been able to talk to me, I'd axed him who he thought war the gal he war after, but maybe he don't know hisself. Jist guessin' at her bein' in Red Pine. To be sure, I know nothin' of the past history o' any o' the Red Pine gals, seein' as I never come a-courtin' any o' them."

"Nor do I know enough of any of them to make a guess who the heirsch might be. There are—let me see—six young ladies in Red Pine, and all bear the names of those I suppose to be their fathers. But what next, Rattler?"

"Circle the lake and see what we can find," was the old man's prompt reply, and they at once set off southward along the lake.

By this time it was quite dark. An ominous silence surrounded them, but as they moved along, they were suddenly startled by the crack of a pistol, a groan, and the shriek of female voices.

"Thar, by the Rosycrusians!" cried Rattler.

"The red demons have got the girls!" exclaimed Deerhunter. "Do you see yonder light ahead?"

"Should say so—it's a camp-fire."

They crept forward and soon gained a point whence they could command a view of the fire. They saw fully a score of red-skins and white within its glow, and in their midst they beheld the object of their search, Kitty and Dorothy. A white man, with his face covered with a bushy beard, stood between the girls holding each one by the arm. Another renegade or outlaw stood over by Simple Sam evidently

teasing him, while at one side lay the lifeless form of Rube Bunker.

Dorothy seemed downcast and unconscious of what was going on around her. Her head drooped forward and her hands hung clasped before her. But Kitty, with her hat hanging at her back, stood erect—the very personification of irate and defiant beauty.

"The red fiends!" Deerhunter fairly hissed, after gazing upon them for a moment.

"Yes; they're p'izen ones, too!" replied Rattler. "And what an easy thing it'd be to svat a pair o' them—but what good 'd it do? It'd only put the rest on their guard. But we must do somethin', lad—I've got to do somethin' desperit, for I'm gittin' hot! Don't ye hear the blood go bubblin' along my veins? Why, the hair on my head's beginnin' to kink, and the moccasins on my feet to fry and curl, with the white heat o' the Red River Epidemic. Boy, I can't help it, and less I can work off the spell by pullin' up a tree or doin' somethin' awful, I'll burn up with spontaneous combustion. If you'll throw a leetle dust in them Ingins' eyes, I'll agree to wade in thar and whip the hulk infernal gang, outlaws and all, and rescue the gals."

"I'll do it, Rattler!" quickly declared the boy. "You can just hold yourself in trim to sail in, for I've an idea that I *can* do the eye-dustin' in fine style. I'll try it, anyhow."

"Now, boy, you're jokin'," said Rattler, incredulously.

"Not a bit of it; I mean what I say—I don't intend you shall burn up, and if you'll give your attention to the gals while the Ingins are diggin' the dust out of their eyes, you'll have all you can attend to."

"Boy, what wild, visionary scheme's in your head?"

Deerhunter told him. The old man shook his head.

"It'll be risky," he said.

The boy took off his cap, and emptied the contents of his powder-flask into it. This done, he was ready for work.

"It's a good scheme, lad," the old man went on; "if you can make it scour, I'll break a trace but what I do my part. But you'll have to wait and watch till the gals are furdur from the fire or you might rurnate their eyes."

"I'm aware of that, Rattler," said Deerhunter, "and now I'm going to creep around to the opposite side and watch my chances and you can do the same."

So saying, the boy left and Old Rattler on hands and knees crept as close to the ice as the shadows would permit.

A few minutes had passed when the bushy bearded outlaw who had the girls in charge turned and led his captives back from the fire a few paces to find them a seat; and even while their backs were turned upon the fire, the lithe figure of Deerhunter glided from the shadows and with the swiftness of a deer bounded across the area of light—brushing against two savages as he ran—sweeping by the roaring camp-fire into which he dashed his cap as he passed, and before a sound had escaped the lips of the startled savages, ere the boy was himself ten feet from the fire, there was a great puff-like ex-



plosion in the heart of the flames and the very air was filled with blinding smoke, scalding ashes, an almost suffocating gas and blazing brands and glowing coals of fire.

Half smothered and blinded by the ashes and smoke, the savages staggered backward sheltering their heads with their hands from the raining fire and ashes, howling, sneezing, and coughing.

So quick and terrible, indeed, had been the explosion of the powder that the smoke and fire and been blown out even beyond where Old Rattler lay concealed. Deerhunter was himself deluged with ashes and fire and his way darkened by the sulphurous smoke; but his back being to the fire his eyes and lungs escaped injury and so he made his way safely into the darkness of the woods.

After recovering his rifle the lad started back to ascertain, if possible, how Old Rattler was getting along with his part of the work. He had gone but a short distance when he heard a step, then a voice inquired:

"That you, Deerhunter?"

"Yes, Rattler; did you succeed?" answered the boy.

"Holy gobsins! the gals war gone when I got to the spot whar I last seen them. I run square aginst that bushy-faced outlaw that had the girls in charge. He was a-cussin' and pawin' the air like a wild roan steer—feelin' for the gals with one hand and rubbin' his eyes with the other. I cut a few circles in that infernal gloom of smoke, ashes, and brimstun, and then skipped out after havin' fetched bushy-face one atwixt the eyes with my fist for luck. The gals, I guess were sharp enough and took advantage o' your grand eye duster and escaped. Boy, that scheme war a lily-throated daisy, a compound dazzler. It war grand beyond *deescription*. A meteoric shower couldn't equal it! The way fire and sparks and burnin' clubs rained down round thar made it epidemicish, 'ill-frish; and I reckon when I swatted that feller atwixt the eyes he thought old Satan had punched him with his poker."

"If them reds rekindle their fire we can tell, I presume, whether the girls have escaped or were taken away," said Deerhunter.

"Very likely," said Old Rattler, "and as thars a little hoodoo risin' out there already, I reckon they're beginnin' to git their peepers cleared o' dust."

In the course of a few minutes a fire was rekindled, sure enough, on the very spot where the other had burned so brightly, and creeping as close as they durst they looked upon the savage band. And a sorry and distressed-looking crew it was. Those that had stood close to and facing the fire when the explosion occurred were almost blinded, being burned and scorched in the face and in some instances the hair singed off their heads. The outlaw appeared from the gloom minus his captives but with a broken nose and bloody face.

The loss of their captives did not seem to concern the red-skins as much now as their injuries, and while the outlaws cursed and raved with impotent rage most of the savages were squatted here and there tenderly rubbing their burning faces and smarting, weeping eyes.

The few warriors that had escaped injury took their positions on guard near where the light and darkness met, determined that another accident of the kind should not occur for the want of proper vigilance.

Simple Sam was nowhere to be seen. In fact, he had left a few minutes before the explosion.

The savages were not ignorant of the cause of their mishap nor of who the author was, and believing the boy had been equally successful in getting away with the girls, they made no attempt in their general misery to follow them.

"Boy," whispered Old Rattler with a chuckle, "it looks like a blind-asylum there, don't it? I can see the dew-drops glitterin' on the noses o' seven o' them red rinded orphans—them as are knucklin' their eyes. Great Rosycrusians! if we'd light down on that pack couldn't we pile 'em? I expect you'd better take keer o' me, boy—take me away and tie me up, or if I git set ago'in' I may *deestroy* the bull Ingin nation, and if I did, think o' the missionaries and the Ingins-agents, and soldiers, and scouts that 'll be thrown out o' employment! It makes me stagger to think o' it. But s'pose we swat 'em one for luck, and light out—no, that won't do either, for it may endanger the lives o' the gals if they're alone in the woods."

"Yes, for the girls' sake we had better let them alone," said Deerhunter, "for if they get set in motion now, they'll be worse than bloodhounds."

"Then let's be movin'," said Rattler.

They turned and glided away in the direction of Timothy Bain's cabin: and had nearly reached that building when they discovered it was on fire on the inside. The flames were already issuing from the south window, and in the wavering light the scouts could see the shadowy forms of red-skins standing and moving about.

As they stood watching the growing fire, a pent-up scream suddenly smote upon their ears. It came from the burning cabin. They saw the red-skins start and move up closer to the building. Then they saw the door of the house suddenly thrown open and two female forms rush out into the air.

"My Lord! Rattler, it's them girls, Kitty and Dorothy!"

"It are, boy, sure as there be a heaven! and they have rushed right out into the red-skins power—there! one o' them has fainted."

"Dorothy, poor girl," said Deerhunter sadly; "Rattler, shall we attack the red demons?"

"Boy, I'm ruinatin' for a fight, but we could never handle them critters all in a stand-up and knock-down fight. If we had daylight and could fight on a retreat we'd open an airy aperture through some o' them, you bet—they wouldn't be a before-breakfast exercise for us. We could epidemicize a few o' them from whar we stand but that'd advertise our presence and we'd have to promenade an' that'd leave the gals in a wusser shape'n ever."

"Rattler, here then, take my gun!" exclaimed Deerhunter, "I'm going to wade among theru Ingins and play Simple Sam and watch for a chance to rescue them girls."

"Boy, you'll git your head bu'sted sure as you do," declared Rattler.



"I'll risk it, anyhow," said the boy dragging the hair down into his eyes and streaking his face with dirt. Then changing his hunting shirt inside out, and his leggings, also, and tying some strips of bark peeled from a bush hard by around his ankles, he was ready to start.

"Boy, you'd better not go," again admonished Rattler.

"Be cheerful, Rattler," was the fearless youth's reply, "and if I get a chance to throw dust in the varmints' eyes you be ready to sail in."

"Oh, you young pup dare-devil! I never set eyes on your match," declared Rattler, but his words were lost on the fearless boy who boldly advanced from the shadows into the light and walked toward the savages several of whom advanced to meet him the moment his presence was discovered. They drew their tomahawks as they advanced, and Rattler seeing this hostile movement believed they intended to brain the boy and so raised his rifle to shoot down the first one that attempted to raise a weapon. But the foremost one looking into the face of the hatless youth seemed satisfied as to who the intruder was and turned away with a grunt.

"The gol-dumb'd ejjits!" mused Rattler. "I reckon all a boy's got to do is to look cross-eyed and he's a Simple Sam. Great Rosycrusians! if he could only dust their eyes now like he did—Hullo! what ails the red-rinded fools now?"

This mental interrogatory was occasioned by a sudden burst of excitement and a movement of the Indians toward the lake.

Looking in that direction Old Rattler started and the blood ran icy in his veins, for he beheld the veritable Simple Sam himself walking toward the burning cabin.

"Great Lord!" the old borderman groaned in spirit, "Deerhunter's a dead boy now! an epidemic can't save the brave lad!"

## CHAPTER XI. THE WRONG GIRL.

DEERHUNTER'S attention was drawn, by the savages' excitement, to the simple boy whom he was representing among the savages, and he at once realized his great peril. He knew, if put to the test, that he could not maintain the character he had assumed, and, even if he could have done so, he had too much honor to imperil the life of poor Sam by taking any further advantage of his infirmities. So he saw that he must act promptly, and, walking over to where Kitty sat supporting the head of Dorothy in her lap, he picked up a club that lay near, dealt the savage that stood guarding them a blow on the head that felled him half dead to the earth, saying to the girls as he did so, in his natural voice:

"Be of good cheer girls; you'll be rescued!"

"Oh, Deerhunter!" burst from Kitty's lips; but the boy heard her words, for, with a yell of defiance, he bounded across the open yard in front of the burning cabin and plunged into the shadows of the woods, pursued by half of the now thoroughly enraged foe.

In dire suspense Rattler maintained his position waiting and watching. It was several minutes before he saw any of the savages that

had gone in pursuit of Deerhunter return. They came back in ones and twos, and the look of dejection and disappointment that their faces wore gave the old borderman hope for the boy.

An hour had almost passed when the old man's ears were greeted by a stealthy movement in the bushes behind him. He knew not whether it was a savage or Deerhunter, and in hopes of deciding the matter without speaking, he slowly drew back the hammer of his rifle. The click of the lock called forth the whispered admonition:

"Easy there, Rattler, if that be you?"

"Come for'd, Deerhunter, you reckless scamp," replied the old scout, for he recognized the boy's voice even in his whispered words.

The next moment the two scouts were together.

"A close call that, Rattler," observed Deerhunter. "Confound that Simple Sam, I didn't suppose he'd ramble 'round all night, and after I seen I was into it I was bound the boy shouldn't suffer on my account, and so I let 'em know I was no cross-eyed gumphead."

"I see'd the hull performance," said Rattler, "and I smiled to see how kitterny you flew around. Bu'sted an Injin, didn't ye?"

"I welted one over the head a lively jolt, at any rate—bullo, there's more red-skins comin' in!"

"By the Rosycrusians!" exclaimed Rattler, "them's the folks into whose eyes you pawed dust, boy, down the lake. See how droopish they look; and look at old bushy-face's bandaged head. Say, I've got to git back a mile or two, and have a good, hearty, wild-cat laugh. It's been 'cumulatin' in me for hours, and I've got to fight or laugh one, and that soon, too."

Kitty and Dorothy were kept at the burning cabin for some time, then the savages marched away with them in a northwesterly course.

As they moved along the captives saw a number of lurid lights in the sky before them and knew at once that they were reflected from the burning homes of the settlers.

After an hour's travel the party came to a cabin which so far had escaped the flames. The captives were conducted into the building which they found already occupied by four persons three of whom were white men and the other an Indian chief.

A fire burning in an open fire-place lit up the room and as the eyes of the four fell upon the face of the captives, one of the outlaws, for such the three white men were, exclaimed:

"By Judas! Powell, there's our girl!"

Both of the girls started and glanced at the speaker. They recognized something familiar about the voice, but the rough, sandy-bearded face of the man was that of a total stranger.

The chief was the noted Little Priest, a crafty, cunning savage and leader of the forces investing Red Pine. He feasted his little, snakish eyes upon the captives with a look that caused them to shudder.

The villain, Fenton Powell, turning to the savage, said:

"There, Little Priest, have I not kept my word, and found you a white squaw such as your heart craved? There she is," and he point-



ed to Dorothy who shrunk away as if from the presence of a serpent.

"Who have that squaw?" asked the chief pointing to Kitty, with a covetous look.

"Your old friend here, Dandy Bill, will take her to his palace over in the Dominion," replied Powell, as indifferently as though parceling out cattle to his friends.

Kitty's heart almost ceased to beat when she learned that she not only stood in the presence of that infamous outlaw, Dandy Bill, but was to be given into his power. Recovering her self-possession, however, she found words to say:

"I supposed this was an Indian war—not that of white men against two helpless girls."

"Rest easy as you can, girls," said Powell with suave politeness, "for we will not quarrel about what cannot be helped."

After some further words on the part of Kitty and the villain, Little Priest went out and held a long consultation with his warriors.

When he came back his face wore an angry, savage scowl. He lit his pipe, and seating himself on the floor, smoked in silence.

Powell nor his confederates disturbed his silent meditations.

It was quite evident that the chief was in bad humor. The defeat of his warriors in the attack on the settlers, and the death of so many of them, grieved him sorely.

Scouts kept coming and going during the entire night, but they brought no news that was encouraging.

A couch of blankets was spread on the floor in a little room adjoining, for the maidens. They seated themselves upon it, and all night long sat locked in each other's arms, talking in whispers and weeping.

Daylight at length dawned. The savage killed a calf belonging to one of the settlers, and this was dressed and broiled and served for breakfast along with some green corn roasted in the husk in hot ashes.

The captives were offered some of the viands, but declined them.

Along toward noon Little Priest called a council of all his warriors in front of the cabin. Over a hundred painted and plumed savages sat in the circle, and as Kitty looked out upon them her heart grew sick, and it was all she could do to master her hitherto splendid courage.

After the council was over Little Priest entered the cabin, and approaching Dorothy, said:

"White squaw go now—she ride horse with Little Priest!"

The girl uttered a shriek and started back, clinging to Kitty. The chief took her by the arm and half-dragged her away.

"Oh, Kitty! Farewell! farewell!" she moaned in the bitterest agony.

Kitty burst into tears, and attempted to follow her young friend, when Powell arrested her, saying:

"Not yet, Miss Hawkins. The Indians are only going to change their base of operations over to the woods, while we will have the country entirely as soon as the horses arrive."

Kitty's grief was quickly changed to indigna-

tion and rage, and turning, her eyes flashing like coals of fire, she exclaimed:

"Wretch, keep your hands to yourself! It is only your brute strength that saves you from being strangled!"

"You're a kind of Lucretia Borgia, ain't you? But then, you'll be tamed, my fine girl," replied the man. "I see you have a little of the old Allen fire in you."

Kitty turned her back upon the villain, and walking to the window looked out after the savages, who were moving away with Dorothy.

Fenton Powell finally left the room, closing the door behind him. Just outside he met the sandy-bearded Dandy Bill.

"How soon will you be ready to start, Bill?" he asked.

"In a very short time; but say, Powell, I'd like to make a change in our programme."

"Well, what is it?" demanded Powell.

"Make the girl my wife for good, and stand by her."

"And thwart me?"

"Oh, no; not at all! Carry out our agreement all but—but—well, I marry the girl and live with her. I believe she loves me, and—"

"And you love her," sneered Powell, distrustfully.

"She's a splendid little girl, Powell. I admire her, at least," replied the outlaw, laughing behind his mask.

"It won't do—I will do nothing unless we carry out our old arrangements," declared Powell.

"All right, Fenton Powell: I'm not the man to break my word for a small thing."

Meanwhile Kitty was pacing the floor in a dreadful agony of mind. Half an hour had passed thus when the door opened, and *Neal Gordon entered the room!*

"Oh, Neal!" she cried, starting toward the young scout, her face beaming with joy; "have you come to save me?"

"If I can, Kitty," was the man's reply, given in a half-whimpering tone.

"If you can? What do you mean by that? There are but two or three outlaws about—the Indians left here and went over to the timber. You have two revolvers; let me have one, for you know I can use it."

"Fighting will avail nothing now, Kitty."

"Ay, but do you know that Dandy Bill, the outlaw, is around—was here a few moments ago?"

"Yes, I know all, but Kitty, do you know you are the victim of a conspiracy?" and the fellow looked nervously around as if fearing he would be overheard.

"No, I do not," replied the maiden, in surprise.

"Well, it is so," Gordon went on; "you remember I asked you a few days ago if you were the daughter of Squire Hawkins."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, let me say to you that I know more of your own father's history than perhaps you do yourself, for he died, or rather was killed, by Indians when you were quite young."

"When I was four years old," said Kitty.

"Well, your father's true name was Oldham—"



"My father's name—" began Kitty, but the quick-witted girl checked herself, crying: "but pardon my interruption, Neal—go on."

"His name was Oldham, and he was a fugitive from his native State for a crime he never committed. This came to light quite recently, and measures were set on foot to find him after his innocence had been established. It was learned that after leaving his native State and going West he changed his name and was afterward killed by the Indians while living on the Platte river in Nebraska. Then your mother married and she, of course, took the name of Hawkins, and you were giving the name, also."

"How has this been traced out, Neal?" Kitty asked, in surprise.

"By friends of your father."

"Did you know my father?"

"No," but I am a friend of his daughter. Now, Kitty, you are heiress to a large fortune in New Hampshire. Fenton Powell is heir next after you and he—"

"Then he is a relative of mine?" cried Kitty.

"He is a cousin of your father, and with you out of his way he will inherit the fortune."

"Then I understand why he is thus pursuing me," declared Kitty, "and, Neal, I am afraid you have been helping him."

"I confess I have, Kitty, though I was innocent of doing you a wrong, for as I told you once before, I love you, and I now repeat that declaration. Promise me that you will be my wife, and that man shall no longer molest you, and you shall have the fortune the villain would cheat you out of."

"Has not that fortune a great deal to do with your love, Neal?"

"Nothing on earth, Kitty!" he declared, as if hurt by the question. "I knew and loved you before I knew you were aught else than Kitty Hawkins—before I learned that your true name was Eva Oldham—Kitty, why do you smile?"

"At that odd name, Eva Oldham."

"Kitty, you are an enigma," said Gordon; "I believe you take a woman's pleasure in torturing me."

"Oh, no, Neal, I do not; I am frivolous, I know."

"Then why do you not answer me? Surely you care nothing for that young wail, Jack Darrell, or Deerhunter?"

"Deerhunter is a brave and daring boy—worthy of any girl's love," declared Kitty, in an emphatic tone.

"I will admit that," he said, a little petulantly; "but you, I know, do not love him however much you may admire his courage. Now, Kitty, what am I to understand? will you reject my love, and escape the power of this villain Powell, or—"

"If you care so much for me, as Eva Oldham, the heiress, surely you should care enough for Kitty Hawkins to save her from that man's power," declared the girl, in desperate earnestness.

"I do not understand you, exactly, Kitty," Gordon replied, calmly.

"When any one is mistaken about anything," said Kitty, with a faint smile, "old Captain

Swank tells them they're barking up the wrong tree."

"And in what respect is that saying applicable to me?"

"I am *not* Eva Oldham, never was, nor was my father's name Oldham, nor did he ever flee from his native State for a crime he never committed. My father's name was Henry Carroll, and he was slain by the Indians on Platte river. If it is a fortune you have been after, Neal, you have missed it wonderfully in not having made love to Dorothy Bain, for her father's name was Charles Oldham, and her real name is *Eva*!"

"Kitty, come now, you are jesting," the man said.

"True as I live I am not," Kitty continued; "Dorothy's father lived on the Platte with us, and he was slain the same time my father was. Our mothers married about the same time afterward and as Mr. Bain and Mr. Hawkins were old friends they came here together. Dorothy's mother died two years ago and since then she and I have been daily companions. She told me all about her father's trouble as related to her by her mother. She said her mother always claimed that her father was innocent of the murder of David Allen and that time would prove it."

"Did she tell you how her father escaped the mob that took him from the officers to hang him?"

"Yes, that mob was composed of Mr. Oldham's personal friends who believed him innocent of the crime, and after taking him into the woods, ostensibly to kill him, they assisted him to escape and after two years had elapsed sent his wife and child to him."

"And then Dorothy does not know that her father has been exonerated and that he, or his heirs, are heirs to the fortune of David Allen, the very man he was accused of slaying?"

"No, sir, she does not; at least, did not a day or two ago."

"Then that young man, Frank Parker, that came to Red Pine yesterday has not made known his mission yet?"

"He lies at the point of death—wounded by a savage bullet," replied Kitty.

"Indeed!" and there was a faint gleam in Gordon's eyes that Kitty did not fail to notice, yet she could not imagine what thought prompted it.

After a few more remarks Gordon turned and left the room. As he went out and around the building he met Fenton Powell whose face was purple with rage.

"Powell, we have made a mistake—got the wrong girl; that Dorothy Bain is the girl we want."

An oath burst from Powell's lips and then fixing his eyes on Gordon, he said:

"I understand it all!"

"Ah! you have been listening."

"Yes, and heard your love twaddle, and treacherous talk about David Allen's fortune. I understand your game now, sir, is to undermine me. You told me you'd prove beyond question as to that girl being Eva Oldham."

"I thought I had, Powell, and am not sure yet but I was right. That girl in there is as



sharp and shrewd as you or I, and seeing our aim hopes to throw us off our track. As to my "love-twaddle and treacherous talk," Powell, I should think you were rascal enough to understand what I mean—in fact, what that talk developed."

A forced laugh burst from Powell's lips after which he said:

"Well, to make assurance doubly sure, we'll have to have the girl, Dorothy."

"Exactly."

"And in getting her we'll have Little Priest to contend with."

"We'll have to steal her," said the villain Gordon, "but leave that to me, Powell. I can hoodwink that Indian. The nice part will be in getting away with her after she has been once secured without detection; but we'll try and work it some way."

"Then let us leave at once for it would not be too safe should it be discovered that we were here—Hullo, there, Canson, bring along the horses!"

In obedience to this command two men came out of the stables leading six horses saddled and bridled.

Taking the animals around to the door of the cabin, Ki ty was mounted upon one of them. Powell mounted another and taking the reins of the maiden's horse rode away, followed by Neal Gordon and the other two outlaws, all in the saddle, with one led horse.

Scarcely were they fifty rods from the cabin when an old plank that to all appearances lay flat on the ground, was shoved aside and a lithe figure arose from a depression in the earth and gazed after the outlaws.

It was Deerhunter, the Young Scout of the North Woods.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE INDIAN BIVOUC IN THE WOODS.

OVER into the deep, dark forest Little Priest conducted his warriors, who, with the exception of a few scouts still in the woods, comprised his entire force for the investment of Red Pine, and finally went into camp some five miles from the village of the whites. The chief was in no amiable mood. Repeated losses and defeats had almost demoralized his followers, and to his white ally, Dandy Bill, the outlaw, or the White Peacock, as the Indians called the noted dandy-freebooter, he attributed most of his misfortunes. The outlaw had deceived him as to the number of the settlers and the ease with which Red Pine could be captured, he—the chief having intrusted the management of the attack to the outlaw.

Of this, however, Dandy Bill and his friend Powell cared nothing so that they accomplished their ends in securing possession of Eva Oldham at a time when the Indians would be held accountable for her disappearance.

The chief was proud of his fair captive, Dorothy, and yet he felt that she had been dearly purchased.

A comfortable lodge was made of poles and blankets for the maiden, and when she was placed therein all earthly hope faded from her breast and she sunk sobbing to the earth.

Little Priest endeavored to comfort and con-

sole her with the assurance that when night came he would attack Red Pine and bring other maidens to share her captivity.

By this Dorothy knew that the savage intended making a night attack upon her friends, and as she looked out upon the horde of bloodthirsty warriors it did not seem possible that they—her friends—would be able to hold out against such odds. And to make the situation seem all the more hopeless, a fresh party of warriors joined them during the day. They had just come over from the east, flushed with victory at New Ulm, and Mankato, their girdles hung with many ghastly trophies of those now historical massacres.

Dorothy could not shut out the din of their wild rejoicing, but turned her head to elude the horrible sights which her captors seemed to take a demoniac delight in parading before and around her.

Toward evening Little Priest called his warriors around him and excited them into a mad frenzy by a wild stirring harangue and then when darkness fell he led them away through the forest aisles toward the settlement.

Dorothy breathed somewhat easier when she found that she was not to be dragged along with the war-party, but was to remain in custody of a number of savages that were unable to take part in the intended attack on Red Pine, owing to wounds received in their attack on the wood-choppers the day previous and in Deerhunter's "eye-dusting" exploit.

To relieve the place of its gloom a fire was built soon after nightfall a few paces from the maiden's lodge. The disabled warrior had no fears of an attack upon them, for the Indian scouts had brought in the word about sunset that no pale-faces were in the woods but that all had sought the cover of their defense.

Dorothy could see every one of the wounded Indians in whose custody she had been left. The scene presented was that of a field-hospital. There were nearly a score of warriors, lying, sitting and standing around. Some carried their arms in slings, others limped around with wounded limbs. Three or four had bandages around their heads or over an eye, while no less than four lay prone upon the earth mortally wounded. Two sat near these in stoical silence their faces a mass of solid blisters—victims of Deerhunter's powder-explosion.

There was nothing at all formidable in the looks of this party, but when some two or three hours later the sound of battle came down the forest from the direction of Red Pine, they started up with all the excitement and ferocity of their savage natures, intensified by their physical pains, depicted upon their faces.

Dorothy's hands had been bound at her back to the central pole of her lodge, and the sides of the lodge closed up, yet she could hear the sound of the distant conflict, and through interstices in her prison see the excited demonstrations, of her guards. But while the latter were rejoicing over an anticipated victory the maiden was earnestly supplicating her Heavenly Father for victory for her friends and strength to bear her own unknown burden of life.

While thus engaged, the captive's ears were



greeted by a sudden change in the sounds and voices outside.

Leaning forward she peered out, and to her surprise, and not at all to her relief, she beheld the man whom she had heard addressed the night before as Dandy Bill, also Fenton Powell and another villainous-looking white man.

At sight of them her thoughts at once reverted to Kitty Hawkins, and she wondered what had become of her and what had brought the outlaws to the camp of the wounded red-skins. As to the latter she was not long to remain in ignorance, for one of the outlaws said, in a voice whose familiarity almost struck her dumb:

"Well, red-skins, you're not helping to fight the pale-faces, I see."

"We all wounded," replied a savage with a bandaged eye. "We stay and guard pale-face squaw."

"That's nice work," replied the outlaw; "but, say, we've come after that pale-face squaw."

"Ugh!" grunted the Indian. "Little Priest's squaw."

"I know it; but we met Little Priest over here as he went forth to battle, and he told me to come and take her with me and keep her for him. The chief is a friend of Dandy Bill, and he has come to do his bidding. Is the girl in this coop?"

"Waugh!" exclaimed the Indian, stepping in between the outlaws and the captive's lodge. "Black Bird will not give up the pale-face girl."

"Then Black Bird thinks I'm lying, does he?" retorted the outlaw, dropping his hand to his revolver.

"Maybe he do—maybe don't; but Black Bird no let girl go!"

And the Indian's hand dropped to his tomahawk, for the savages were all growing distrustful of Dandy Bill.

A conflict seemed brewing between the wounded red-skin and his old-time friend, and it threatened to be general, for the other wounded warriors at once rallied to their friend's side, while the outlaws grasped their revolvers and half-drew them from their holsters.

"Black Bird," said the outlaw chief, "you insult the friend of Little Priest, and your great chief, Little Crow. Has his tongue ever been crooked to the Sioux? Has he not fought by the side of the red man and killed many enemies? Speak, Black Bird."

"Black Bird has spoken," replied the Indian, with a sullen, dogged demeanor.

"Then you will not let me have the captive and take her to a place of safety to keep her for Little Priest?"

"No!" sullenly.

"Then stand aside!" commanded the outlaw, advancing a step and raising his revolver.

"Black Bird is not a coward," declared the Indian, his single eye blazing with all the ferocity of his soul. But his declaration of courage were the last words he ever spoke, for the revolver of the outlaw flashed in his face and he sunk down lifeless at his post of duty—true to the trust of his chief till the last.

A yell burst from the lips of the other red

skins, and then knives and tomahawks began to fly through the air, while the revolvers of the three outlaws, fired in rapid succession, made the dark aisles of the woodland ring with their short, sharp, spiteful reports.

When Dorothy saw that a conflict was inevitable, her sympathy instinctively sided with the Indians. She felt that she had far less to fear from them than from the outlaws, and when Dandy Bill's pistol rung out and Black Bird fell, a shudder of horror ran through her veins, for the Indian, in falling, fell with half his body inside her lodge—at the same time a hand touching her, she believed it was that of the fallen savage; but she soon learned her mistake, for she heard a voice say, in a sharp whisper:

"Steady, Dorothy, and come, fly with me!"

A man had entered her lodge unobserved on the side opposite to that where the fight was raging. In the dim light that now pervaded her prison she saw the intruder had a beardless face—saw that it was Deerhunter, the Boy Scout!

With a little cry of surprise and joy that would have been easily overheard but for the din of the conflict outside, Dorothy rose to her feet and started to follow the daring boy from the lodge.

Deerhunter, in leaving the prison, stumbled and fell over a form that was creeping on all-fours within the shadow of the lodge; but in an instant he was upon his feet expecting to be confronted by a foe. Instead of a savage, however, he caught the glimpse of a white man, who, having sprung to his feet, grasped Dorothy by the arm and fled with her into the shadows of the darksome woods!

## CHAPTER XIII.

### HOW RATTLER CUT DEERHUNTER OUT.

DOROTHY BAIN did not notice, in the darkness and the intense excitement of the moment, that the man with whom she fled was not Deerhunter, and as soon as they were fairly out of the light and had stopped in the shadows to take breath, the maiden said, her voice tremulous with excitement and joy:

"Oh, Deerhunter! you dear, brave boy, you have saved my life!"

A low, suppressed chuckle escaped her companion's lips.

The girl started and drew back.

"Girl, I'm not Deerhunter, but Old Rattler, the Red River Epidemic," were the words that next fell upon her ears, spoken by a voice she had never heard before and that filled her breast with a new fear.

"Yes, you thiev' old pirate," suddenly came a voice from the darkness hard by—a voice Dorothy recognized as Deerhunter's, "a man that 'd steal victory from a boy like you've done from me, would rob a blind widow of her porridge!"

Old Rattler again went into a fit of chuckling laughter.

"What does this mean, anyhow?" asked Dorothy in fear and perplexity.

"Why," said Deerhunter, "I crawled into



that bower and set you free, and when I came out this old blister tripped me up and ran off with you."

"Is he our enemy?" the maiden inquired.

"No, no, Dorothy, he's Old Tom Rattler, the scout—as brave an old hero as ever trod these woods, but he's given to trickery—he tried to rob me of the honor of rescuing you."

"You are both brave men, and I will divide the honors of my rescue between you," said Dorothy, half-weeping and half-laughing with joy.

"Wait to be honest," said Rattler, "I didn't know the kid was around till he fell over me; then I made up my mind to cut him out o' you, gal, and so here we are. But for a genuine, young pup rooster, I'll admit that boy scrapes the fryin'-pan—he's a plush-throated daisy, a lily-lipped hummer, a velvet-footed cramp, a fawn-eyed—"

"Hold up, Rattler," interrupted Deerhunter, "the fight among the Kilkennys has ended, and the outlaws have waxed it to the red-skins, sure as I live! But I only see two of the white villains—one of them must have fallen."

"Oh, listen to the mockin'-birds!" whispered Rattler; "they've found out after all their fightin' with a Injin horspital, that a third dorg has got away with the bone. Great Rosycrusians! if I'd my rifle here I'd swat them two fellers, and make a clean sweep o' it. Hear 'em snort, and paw the air like fly-pestered steers. Oh! let me git away, 'way back in the deep, dark woods, where I can laugh, for one o' them spells 's comin' on, boy."

"Deerhunter!" said Dorothy, "I do believe one of them men is Neal Gordon in disguise."

"You are right, Dorothy," replied the boy, "Neal Gordon is there, and I have discovered that he is a monstrous villain—that all the months that he has been a comer and goer at Red Pine—welcomed by one and all—admired for his gentle manners and intelligence—nearly worshipped by some, he has been paying a deep and villainous game to wreck the life of an innocent girl, by making her the victim of a foul conspiracy, and that girl is Kitty Hawkins."

"Oh, surely not!" cried Dorothy.

"Yes, it is true, Dorothy," the boy declared.

"The compounded, duplex villain!" exclaimed Old Rattler. "A rope 'round his neck 's what'll ail him if he ever comes to the village. See the infernal hounds lookin' fur track! Now, if they nose off hereaways they'll run ag'inst an epidemic. When I look at them critters, it makes me ashamed o' bein' born a man, instead o' a jackal or a Silurian bloodhound. Oh, Lord! I'm gittin' hot now, boy; the blood's beginnin' to bubble, and my hair to curl and my moccasins to fry. You'd better run me away, or I'll do somethin' gory in the presence o' this little gal. The sight o' them fellers hydrophobias me."

"Then come along," said Deerhunter, with a smile; and taking Dorothy's hand, the young scout led the way northward through the woods.

"Oh, Deerhunter!" exclaimed Dorothy, as they moved along, "do you know where those bad men have taken Kitty?"

"Yes; they carried her away from the cabin

where you were taken last night over into the woods, and I followed them. They halted about two miles from here to await the comin' of night, or a chance to steal you from the Indians. This much I learned by gettin' close enough to overhear them talking. It seems they made a mistake, and got the wrong girl. They wanted you, Dorothy, instead of Kitty. When then three fellers left Kitty in care of one of their number, and went after you, I had a soft snap of it, and bounced onto that one lone outlaw and— Well, I left Kitty over here safe and sound to await my return."

"Thank the Lord!" cried Dorothy, joyfully. "Oh! this is glorious news!"

"Yes, it is," affirmed Old Rattler. "But I'm beginnin' to wonder where I'm to git a thimbleful o' glory outen all this promenadin' through this wood. I allers did like the girls, and allers had good luck in their behalf till I struck this 'ere deestrick; and you, boy, are the sole and lonely cause o' it. You're a little too numerous fur me, I'll confess; but if it were only so 's I could operate with old Comet I'd put on some frills that 'd leave you so bad you'd look like a wart on a log. That's one thing certain, howsumever, you can't make love to both the gals—specially when they're together—and when it comes to flingin' words to the ladies sich as they like I can jist git away with the Lover's Casket. Oh, I'm an old lovmaker from Loveland, boy, and am goin' to climb right over you rough-shod. I'll swamp you, lad, fur the way you've been treatin' me."

Neither Deerhunter nor Dorothy could repress a silent laugh at the jolly old borderman's whimsical nonsense.

After journeying a short distance, Rattler, changing the subject, said:

"Folks, I left my rifle out here a leetle ways and we have either got to part or—"

"Go git it, Rattler—we will wait," said Deerhunter.

"All right," and Rattler departed and in the course of fifteen minutes returned, when the three resumed their journey, finally arriving where Deerhunter had left Kitty.

They found the maiden safe and the meeting between her and Dorothy was one of supreme joy; and while they were thus rejoicing over their escape from the foe and their reunion, Old Rattler, who was ever on the alert, suddenly said, in a whisper to Deerhunter:

"Boy, I hear a noise off hereaways, like the tramp o' hoofs."

"Yes, there are five horses hitched down there. When I cleaned out the robbers' rendezvous and released Kitty I cabbaged their horses, too."

"Great Rosycrusians! Just listen to that!" exclaimed Rattler; "why, boy, your heart is one of stone—a flint—a nigger-head. You're a Silurian monster. Jist think o' how disappointed them two fellers 'll be when they git back and find their friend asleep in—the sleep that knows no wakin', and find their gal and their horses gone! How desolate will be their hearts! Boy, when you hear their voices wailin' through the woods weepin' over their ill-luck, their crushed hopes and lost New Hampshire fortune, your iceberg heart 'll have to melt. If you'd



do the square-cornered thing with them folks you'd take one o' these gals right back to them and on bended knee ax their forgiveness. But, no, you'll do no such a noble, generous thing. Your heart's too rocky—you're too much o' a Red Jersey swine to divide gals even with me. It hurts me, boy—but say, Deerhunter, how would it do to invite them two rascallions to go 'long with us to Red Pine, eh?"

"It'd be a splendid scheme, Rattler, if we had a clear road to the village, for there is a splendid chance to get the drop on them when they return to where they left Kitty. But against we manage them horses and take care of the girls and get to the stockade in safety, we'll have all we can attend to."

"That's all Book-o'-Revelation truth, Deerhunter," affirmed the old borderer, "but it does seem like a waste o' raw glory not to take them scoundrels along and have an afternoon matinee a-seein' which o' them could hang the longest by the neck afore his spirit skipped for Pluto's brimstone diggin's."

Without further delay the captured horses were brought up and the maidens and their rescuers mounting, set off in the direction of Red Pine from whence still came the sound of battle, and over which, in the dark vault of heaven, hung a red, lurid light that filled the hearts of the four with fear for the safety of their friends.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### THE ATTACK ON RED PINE.

DEERHUNTER had not only kept a watch upon the movements of the outlaws after the Indians had left them at the cabin, but he had also kept the settlers posted as to the movement of the red-skins.

And this information enabled Captain Swank to make ample preparations for the defense of the place against a night attack which all felt certain would be the next move, and that, the coming night.

So a line of pickets was thrown out into the woods shortly after nightfall to watch every approach. Between this line and the stockade men were stationed by previously prepared brush-heaps and the deserted buildings that would afford the enemy shelter, with instructions to apply a match the moment the pickets sounded the alarm.

Every light was extinguished inside the defense and with rifles in hand, the settlers awaited the coming of the foe.

About nine o'clock the report of a gun sounded through the night. It was followed in quick succession by several others at different points around the village.

All knew they were the reports of the pickets' guns.

A few moments later tiny specks of fire were seen in a dozen different places shining through the darkness.

Rapidly the specks grew larger and larger, and in their light the pickets could be seen hurrying toward the stockade.

In a few minutes all had been admitted inside the defense.

The burning log-heaps and cabins soon lit up

all the space surrounding the stockade so that a savage could not approach without exposing himself to view. It was a clever idea in Swank, but the savages seemed to have accepted it as an admission of weakness, and finally burst from the woods like a hurricane and with demoniac yells charged toward the stockade.

Coolly and calmly the settlers awaited their approach; then, when within easy range, opened upon them a withering fire that strewed the ground with dead and dying and sent the survivors reeling back into the darkness.

Yells of triumph burst from the lips of the settlers.

But the conflict had not ended. The savages waited until the fires had burned nearly out, then made another assault upon the west side of the stockade which they succeeded in reaching, and while the defenders were engaged in repelling them, another party of savages crept from the shadows and hurled themselves against the gate of the stockade on the east.

So unexpected was this diversion that by the time Swank had called men to the defense of the gate it had been forced open and a score of savages endeavored to rush in; but they were met by an equal number of brave and determined whites, and in the light of Kit Redpath's burning store, a sanguinary hand-to-hand struggle ensued.

In the midst of the conflict—above the din of battle—there suddenly arose a wild, fierce yell from a single pair of lungs outside and the next moment a man on horseback dashed up to the gate and in among the combatants, laying right and left upon the heads of the savages with a club—all the while yelling like a mad demon—his horse rearing, plunging and kicking as if imbued with the spirit of its master.

"Old Rattler, the Red River Epidemic!" yelled Captain Swank, as he caught sight of the mad horseman, and staggered back to escape the hoofs of Old Comet, who seemed no respecter of persons in such a conflict.

The savages were unable to stand before this new enemy, and falling back, they finally turned and fled in wild dismay.

Instantly the gate was closed and barred. Yells of triumph again pealed from the settlers' lips; but their victory this time had been purchased at a dear price. Three of the settlers lay dead, and half a dozen had been more or less severely wounded.

"Lord, Rattler!" exclaimed Captain Swank, advancing to the old borderman, and shaking his hand, "you came in just at the right time. The red devils were givin' us a close rub."

"Glad to hear it, cap'n," responded Rattler, "but when Old Epidemic makes a cavalry charge somebody's got to go home to glory. Oh, that it were daylight, that I might go forth and destroy the hull Ingin nation while my blood is plugin' at white heat through my veins. By the Rosycrusians! captain, these are lively times 'round Red Pine, eh? It's jist what I like—love—worship."

"Rattler," suddenly exclaimed Squire Hawkins, approaching in great excitement, "can you give me any encouragement 'bout our child yet?"



"Bet you your off eye, 'squire, she and t'other gal are safe with Deerhunter on an island in that lake yander."

"Thank the Lord!" exclaimed the 'squire, and he hastened to bear the joyful news to his wife and Timothy Bain.

"That boy, Deerhunter, captain," continued Rattler, "is one o' the most wonderful kids the border ever produced. He's a match for anything—he's a lily-lipped hummer—he's a hull brigade—a compound tragedy."

"Yes, we thought he was the boy for our scout, and he has proven himself equal to the occasion. But what about Neal Gordon?"

"Captain, when I hear that name I could cuss a blue streak—I want to kick myself, and if I'd tell you 'bout him you wouldn't believe me—you'd swear I war a goggled-eyed liar, you'd want to crucify me for a snakish slanderer."

"Well, let it out, anyhow," said Swank, anxiously.

"You'll protect me from self-violence, will ye?"

"Yes."

"Well, sir, by the goblins o' Smoky Hollow, your nice hunter-citizen—your lily-lipped scout, Neal Gordon, is none other than that infernal Canadian outlaw, Dandy Bill!"

Had a thunderbolt fallen from a cloudless sky it would not have startled the captain more violently than did this revelation of Old Rattler. He stood like one dumfounded, and when he finally gained his power of speech, he said, in a tone of disgust:

"Red Pine is the banner settlement of gigantic old fools! It's a wonder the wolves haven't eat us up—perhaps they would if Simple Sam had not kept watch over us. Sly, Rattler, won't you adopt me and take care of me till I'm old enough to run about alone?"

"Wal, I don't b'lieve I keer 'bout startin' an insane asylum myself, but I'll speak to Simple Sam about you, captain," and Rattler shook with pent up laughter at the look of lugubrious disgust on Swank's face.

At this juncture Timothy Bain and 'Squire Hawkins came up to learn the particulars of Dorothy and Kitty's capture and rescue, ending the conversation between Rattler and Swank.

The latter moved away to look after the state of affairs on the other side of the stockade, and to assist in caring for the dead and wounded.

The savages, after their fight at the gate, withdrew to the woods, taking most of their wounded, but leaving their dead.

All night long the settlers stood by their arms, but they had no further occasion for their use. The savages did not renew their attack, and before daylight had dawned they raised the siege of Red Pine and left the country, evidently in disgust.

And just as the sun arose over the eastern woodland that same morning, a canoe with three occupants was seen to put out from a little island in Lake Shetek and head toward Red Pine.

All knew who the occupants were—Deerhunter, Dorothy and Kitty.

In a few minutes the trio had reached the shore and landed, amid the wildest shouts of

joy from the lips of the settlers who, headed by Old Rattler and Captain Swank, had gone down to the lake to escort them to the stockade.

## CHAPTER XV.

### FENTON POWELL FOUND DYING.

AFTER quiet and good feeling had once more been restored among the settlers at Red Pine, Captain Swank took it upon himself to inform his friends of the true character of Neal Gordon—the handsome young hunter whom they had all so admired, honored and feasted for so many months.

So startling was the revelation, however, that few could give credence to the story, but when Deerhunter and Old Rattler, as well as Kitty and Dorothy, bore witness to the fact, they were compelled to accept it as true, and then the betrayed confidence of the settlers changed to indignation, and they became clamorous for the blood of the outlaw who had so artfully deceived them as to his true character.

Kitty Hawkins narrated to her father, Timothy Bain and others, the conversation that had taken place between her and Neal Gordon the day before, in relation to Charles Oldham and his daughter Eva; and the mistake the outlaw had made in taking her for Eva Oldham. And this proved another surprise to those who heard it, though Timothy Bain was not ignorant of the fact that Dorothy's own father's true name was Oldham, although at the time of his death he went by the name of Henry Percival—the name he had assumed after he fled from New Hampshire. Mrs. Oldham being a noble and pure-hearted woman, had, before she married Timothy Bain, made a clean breast of the dark secret that had clouded the life of her dead husband, and out of respect for her and her sweet child, Dorothy, he had ever kept that secret buried in his breast, so that no one at Red Pine, aside from the Hawkins family, knew aught else than that Dorothy was Timothy Bain's own daughter until the machinations of Neal Gordon and Fenton Powell revealed the secret. But since Deerhunter had told Dorothy and Kitty of the mission of Frank Parker to Red Pine—of the fact that Charles Oldham was not guilty of the murder of David Allen and that he—Parker—was in search of Charles Oldham's child, Dorothy was only too glad to let the truth be known.

"But how the villain, Neal Gordon, should make the mistake and take Kitty for Eva Oldham, is what puzzles me," said 'Squire Hawkins.

"By some means or other," said Kitty, "he had learned that my own father was killed by Indians on the Platte river in Nebraska. At least, he spoke to me a few days ago about having seen the horrors of a previous Indian war and of the fact that Mr. Hawkins was not my father, and I, unthoughtfully, admitted that such was true."

"Well, I presume Frank Parker will throw some light on this strange affair," said Timothy Bain, "when he is able. I would go to him this minute but it might excite him. He has scarcely recovered from the excitement of last night's battle which the doctor said had given him a serious back-set."



"There are some papers in the little trunk I was compelled to conceal in the woods the night we fled from Rube Bunker," said Dorothy, "that will go far toward establishing my identity."

"They should be recovered at once, Dorothy," said 'Squire Hawkins, "for I hope the rumor is true that you are an heiress."

"I will ask Deerhunter to go and bring the trunk if it has not been found by the savages," said Dorothy, going out in search of the boy.

Deerhunter was only too glad to serve the maiden, and, accompanied by Old Rattler, he set off around the lake, Dorothy having given him such directions as she thought would enable him to find the trunk.

The two scouts moved along with extreme caution for they knew what dangers still lurked in the woods. They had passed just beyond the ruins of Timothy Bain's cabin when their ears were greeted with a groan.

The scouts came to a stop.

"It may be a decoy," said Deerhunter.

"Nary decoy," said Old Rattler, "for there it goes again and it's got the true agony ring in it. Yes, somebody's got hisself hurt."

They moved cautiously in the direction whence the sound came and soon were in sight of a man lying prone upon the earth and writhing in pain and agony.

Advancing to the side of the man they recognized him as the villain, Fenton Powell.

"Hullo, old man," said Rattler, "you're down at last ar'n't you?"

"Gods, man, I'm dying!" groaned the outlaw looking up into the scouts' faces, with glassy, blood-shot eyes.

"Ingins sv'at you?"

"No, Dandy Bill the outlaw did it, curse him!"

"When!" ejaculated Old Rattler, "what's the sayin' 'bout when rogues fall out honest men get their dues?"

"It's very true in my case, old man," said Powell; I'm 'bout gone, and yet I'd like to see that man, Parker, if he's still living, and somebody else—I, Dorothy Bain, before I die."

"Reckon they'd like to see you, too," said Rattler.

"I'll go for men and a litter to move him to the village," said Deerhunter.

"All right, lad, skip," said Rattler, "and I'll stay with the man."

The boy hurried away when Rattler asked:

"Whar you hurt, stranger?"

"Shot through the body."

"You and Dandy couldn't agree on division o' spoils, eh?"

"We had no spoils to divide—we lost everything last night."

"Them two gals, you mean?"

"Yes; are they safe?"

"You bet; Deerhunter saved them, and Dorothy will get her fortune in New Hampshire."

"What do you know about that, man?" asked Powell.

"That man, Frank Parker, told me all about the attempted murder of David Allen, the arrest of Charles Oldham and his being made way with by a mob; of old David's ultimate recovery of his senses, and the development of the fact by

one John Reed that Charles Oldham had not been lynched, but had fled to the West and there lived with his wife and child, till killed by the Ingins, under an assumed name; of the fact that David Allen declared that Oldham was *not* the man that had attempted to murder him; of the fact that old David had willed his property to one Eva Oldham, the child of Charles Oldham, and that Reed had been employed to hunt up the young heiress, and owing to infirmities had turned the work over to Frank Parker, a skillful young detective."

"Exactly," said Powell, "and it has been my aim, with the aim of Dandy Bill and the savages, to prevent Eva Oldham ever being found, for with her out of the way I would inherit the property of David Allen. My name is not Powell, but James Fenwick. I am a nephew of David Allen. It was I who struck the blow that felled David Allen unconscious for fifteen years. I was concealed in his room, and when Charles Oldham visited his sick bed I struck the blow, just as he left the house, which I intended should be charged to him. I knew Charles was a favorite with old David, and with both out of the way I would be a rich man. But nearly seventeen years have passed and I am now dying a beggar, a murderer—a victim of my own evil work. Poor Charles Oldham is dead—murdered by my hand, as it were. When John Reed revealed to old David the fact that Oldham had not been lynched, but spirited away, I stood in the hall of the house and heard most of Reed's revelation. I did not, however, hear the name that Oldham had assumed after leaving Allendale. Had I heard it I would have had no trouble in finding Eva Oldham. So my only show was to dog the footsteps of Reed and his detective, Frank Parker. By this means I got track of Oldham's family, and like another fool, I took that villain, Dandy Bill, into my confidence. I had long known him and had great confidence in him, and to him I intrusted the work of ferreting out Eva's identity and abducting her. I did not wish to be seen in Red Pine, through fear that Mrs. Oldham—Eva's mother—would recognize me, and then Eva's disappearance would be associated with my visit at Red Pine, and I given trouble when it was found how matters stood at Allendale. I did not know Mrs. Oldham, afterward Mrs. Bain, was dead, or I should have come to Red Pine in person. My trusting so much to Dandy Bill has led to my utter defeat. The villain claimed all along that Kitty Hawkins was Eva Oldham, for he had learned that her father had been killed at Sublette's Ford, on the Platte river—the same place where Charles Oldham had been killed by the Indians. He had been months fooling along with the matter, and when the truth was made known I found the villain had fallen in love with Kitty, and had taken his time to woo and win her with the base and treacherous intention of giving me away and getting the fortune himself. He had the audacity to tell me so last night, after we lost both the girls, and the result was we quarreled, and he drew a pistol and shot me down and left me for dead."

"Then if you'd got away with Eva Oldham,



I reckon you'd put her out of the way," observed Rattler.

"She would never have been seen by John Reed or Frank Parker," the villain said. "Her disappearance would have been laid to the savages, had we succeeded in getting her away last night."

"The Lord was on our side then, aided by that young scout, Deerhunter," said Rattler.

A groan was Powell's only response.

Several minutes of silence followed.

Deerhunter finally returned with four men, who placed the dying wretch on a litter and started with him to the village, while the boy scout and Rattler went on in search of Dorothy's trunk.

## CHAPTER XVI. THE CURTAIN FALLS.

DEERHUNTER and Old Rattler moved slowly along the lake shore, discussing the dangers surrounding Red Pine, and the probable outcome of the Indian war.

They had nearly reached the point where Dorothy and Kitty had landed the night of their adventure with Rube Bunker, when Deerhunter suddenly stopped, exclaiming in a startled voice:

"Holy mokes! Look there, Rattler!"

"Great Rosycrusians!" burst from the old borderman's lips, as his eyes fell upon the object to which the boy called attention.

Under a tree sat, what they, at a glance, supposed to be Dorothy's trunk. It was open, and upon the ground around it was strewn the contents, and about a rod beyond lay two human bodies, locked in each other's embrace—motionless, dead! The clothing had been nearly torn from their bodies in the desperate struggle that must have ensued between them.

Advancing to the side of the dead foes, the scouts gazed down into the upturned face of the one that lay underneath. It was a horribly contorted face, yet they readily recognized it as the face of Neal Gordon, *alias* Dandy Bill, the outlaw! He was stone dead and the expression of his face told that he had died a frightful death. His right hand clutched a knife that was driven to the guard in his adversary's side.

"The smooth-tongued scoundrel!" said Deerhunter, "he has met his death at last, and an awful, violent one it has been."

"Yes, but who's the epidemic that struck him, boy?" observed Rattler; "I see it's a white man."

The outlaw's slayer lay upon his stomach, his face pressed so close against the outlaw's throat that it could not be seen. Rattler endeavored to pull them apart, but they were locked together in the icy, rigidity of death, and he could do nothing but roll them over. As he did so a cry of surprise and horror burst from the lips of both the scouts.

*The slayer of Dandy Bill was Simple Sam!*

The boy's white teeth were fastened upon the throat of the outlaw—sunk deep in the flesh and muscles, and thus had he and the outlaw died.

"Great, holy goblins!" exclaimed Old Rattler, "what does this mean, boy? Can you tell me, eh?"

"The Lord only knows!" replied Deerhunter, "but I have an idea—Simple Sam in his wanderings has found that trunk and while amusing himself with its contents Neal Gordon came upon him, and has endeavored to take the things from him or else provoked him to madness by some cruelty. I have heard it said that there slumbered a demon in the heart of all simple persons, and that when it became aroused it transformed its possessor into a fiend incarnate. Perhaps this has been the case with Simple Sam. At any rate, it is my theory of the case."

"You may be right, lad," said Old Rattler, "and you may be wrong. There may be something that dates far back of this that has led to this tragedy. There may've been a method in Simple Sam's idiocy that through all the years that he has been wanderin' about, he war preparin' for this very deed. If we could lift the veil that clouded his life and mind perhaps we would see at the bottom of all some hellish act of that dead outlaw, Dandy Bill. I may be wrong, lad, but this I will alers believe, though I reckon the secret of this death struggle will never be known until the end o' time. But be that as't may, Simple Sam has done his country a noble service and he deserves Christian burial and a lastin' monument."

Deerhunter gathered up Dorothy's things and replacing them in the trunk, started on their return to Red Pine where they arrived in due course of time.

Fenton Powell was dead when the two scout reached the village. He had lived long enough to make a confession of all his crimes against David Allen, Charles Oldham, and Eva; but as it was substantially the same as has already been made known to the reader we will not repeat it.

The body of Simple Sam was brought to the village and buried along with the settlers who had fallen in defense of the place.

The scouts, Deerhunter and Old Rattler, kept in the woods for several days longer to make sure that the Indians had left the vicinity for good.

Finally a courier arrived from Fort Ridgely, bringing the joyful intelligence that the military had succeeded in whipping the Indians into submission, and that the war was virtually at an end.

This filled the hearts of all with joy, and the settlers finally went forth from their defenses and began the rebuilding of their homes.

Frank Parker's recovery was slow. He was compelled to remain at Red Pine for over six months, and during this time of convalescing no one was more considerate of his wants and comforts than Dorothy Bain, or Eva Oldham, as she proved herself to be beyond all question. And what proved the most surprising to all, the friendship that had sprung up between the young detective and the gentle, kind-hearted girl, ripened into love, and when they, accompanied by Timothy Bain, the kind step father, from whom Dorothy refused to be separated, started East, their love had been plighted to each other.

Kit Redpath rebuilt his store and continued business as the pioneer merchant of Red Pine,



In view of the splendid manner in which Captain Swank had managed the defense of the place, the citizens, by a unanimous vote, promoted him to the rank of general, and no man ever felt prouder of an honor than did Solomon Swank of his new title.

Old Rattler remained several weeks at Red Pine, and when he finally bid the settlers all good-by and left for a new field of adventure, Deerhunter accompanied him a short ways from the village; and when it finally came their time to part, the old fellow took the boy by the hand, and with a mist in his eyes said:

"Boy, I hate to part with you, but I'll have to. If I could 'a' cut you out o' that gal Kitty, as I've been tryin' to do, I'd stayed, but it war no use. I see'd, lad, that you and her are paralyzed on each other, and thar war no show for me. Boy, she's a lovely gal, and 'll make you a noble companion—oh! ye needn't blush!—and you deserve a good wife, boy, for you are a lily-lipped hummer. We may never meet again—in a log, especially—but, boy, I'll never forgit you, nor the wild, frolicsome times we've had together. But if I'm on this side o' the dark river when you and Kitty are made one, I want to be at the weddin'. Don't forgit that, boy, or by the great Rosycrusians, I'll—"

"All right, Rattler, all right."

And thus the two noted scouts parted.

THE END.

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